Tadabbur i Qur'ān Vol.7

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Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Vol. 7

Exegesis of

Sūrah al-Mu'min (40) – Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt (51)

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī

Rendered into English

by
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Foreward
(1st Edition)

All gratitude be to God that the sixth volume[1] of *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* is being handed over to the press for printing. God willing, before the year ends, this volume will be in the hands of its admirers. I have completed the Sūrah Muzammil's *tafsīr*, which in other words means that the seventh volume is ready as well, and the *eighth* and final one is in progress. While God knows best when this work will reach completion, however, my own estimate is that if I am blessed with life and health, this long and arduous journey will inshallāh reach its culmination within the coming year.

The fourteenth century *hijrah* is also reaching its end. The publisher of this work, Mājid Khāwar ardently wishes that this *tafsīr* reaches its completion with the century reaching its completion. He thinks that the union of both these events will be a blessed union, and he will be able to greet the new *hijrah* century with the complete set of *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*. My own sympathies too go out to his enthusiasm. To keep his wish I have even increased the extent of my work and am also trying to be vigilant in my life routine. Though what God wills will happen and His will is based on wisdom and I am satisfied with from my heart, yet the desire of the publisher and the writer is what has just been referred to.

The *sūrahs* of the last group are more difficult than the rest viz a viz their language and the coherence of their discourse, as referred to in the foreword of volume five[2]. At some instances, I could not find appropriate Urdu words and styles in Urdu to aptly express the purport in Arabic; however, gratitude be to God, I am working with full concentration. Hard work is being put in; but now each step is bringing me closer to the destination. For this reason, thank God the tenacity of the pen and freshness of the mind is intact and hopefully they shall inshallāh remain intact till the end.

During this time, I have received many letters from people who considered this book to be valuable addition to *tafsīr* literature. These letters have praised this service of mine beyond my expectations. I am grateful to all these sincere individuals. If the learned are satisfied on this service, then I consider myself to be duly rewarded for it in this world. The only desire which remains is that God accepts it and make it a means of my salvation. The admirers of this Book are requested to remember this

1 . Volume seven as per the new arrangement.
2 . Volume six as per the new arrangement.

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desire of mine in their prayers.

I thank Mr Mājid Khāwar my dear friend and also congratulate him for completing a task that he had taken upon himself and fulfilled it with elegance and style. Even though he was a novice in the field of printing as are a result of which the admirers of this work were inflicted with many doubts but everyone person of taste praised his dexterity on seeing volume five. It is my prayer that God chooses him to serve His Book and bless him with the virtues of true knowledge and righteous deeds.

Wassalam
Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī
Raḥmānabād

10th November 1978 AD
8th Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Mu’min (40)

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Sūrah al-Mu’min

Central Theme

Like the previous *sūrahs* of this group, this *sūrah* too is based on *tawḥīd* (monotheism). Other principal subjects of the Qur’ān are also discussed in it; however, not in a primary way but in a secondary one – as a consequences of *tawḥīd*.

The Qur’ānic name of this *sūrah* is Ḥā Mīm. The next six *sūrahs* also share this name. All these seven *sūrahs* are generally known as Ḥawā Mīm and like their names discuss similar topics. All these *sūrahs* belong to the period when the extent of discussion between monotheism and polytheism had become so intense that it was increasingly becoming difficult for the Prophet (sws) and his companions to live in Makkah without exposing themselves to persecution. A slight hint of migration can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. These circumstances will gradually become very clear in this and the succeeding *sūrahs*, and as a consequence the divine promise of support and help will also continue to become even more evident. Muslims who were facing testing times are encouraged in this *sūrah*, those who were facing danger are assured and those who in spite of having a sympathetic attitude towards the call of the Prophet (sws) were as yet not openly supporting it because of some expediency are guided that they should now throw caution to the wind and get ready to strive for the supremacy of this call; the Almighty will help and support them

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-6): This Book has been revealed by the God Who is dominant and mighty and also has knowledge of all things. He also forgives sins and accepts repentance and is stern in retribution and has control and authority. No one is worthy of worship except Him. Everyone will return to Him and every one will be gathered before Him. Only those people are indulging in frivolous arguments in opposition to this Book who are rejecters of reward and punishment. People who are making hay in this land should not be a source of misconception for anyone. The history of previous nations of this land is enough for a lesson to be learnt. These nations too indulged in frivolous arguments to defeat the truth and vanquish the messengers of God. However, before they could lay their hands on their respective messenger, a torment visited them. In a similar manner, the law of retribution of God is coming into play for these arrogant people and because of their rebelliousness and the anarchy they caused they will become the firewood of Hell.

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Verses (7-9): Those who have become indifferent to God and the Hereafter relying on the intercession of the angels should know that the favoured angels of God will not intercede for those who rebel against Him; on the contrary, these angels are always busy in celebrating the praises of their Lord and in extolling Him. They believe in God and continue to seek forgiveness for the believers who repent from their evil ways and adhere to the right path.

Verses (10-12): A brief reference is given to the way in which the idolaters will confess their crime on the Day of Judgement and plead before the Almighty, and the curse which God will lay on them in response to these pleadings.

Verses (13-20): All mercies and calamities are in the control of God; hence only He is worthy of being worshipped and obeyed. Exalted is He in status and lofty. No one can be aware of His secrets. He is the sole master of the Day of Judgement and no one will be able to intercede for the idolaters.

Verses (21-22): Evidence is presented from history that nations who denied their respective messengers who called them towards monotheism were visited by divine punishment and at this instance their alleged deities could be of no avail to them. The Quraysh are warned that they too will meet a similar fate if they follow suit.

Verses (23-55): A specific part of the account of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh is recounted so that a reminder can be sounded to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) and his companions with regard to the following points:

- the Quraysh are warned that with regard to power and might, the Pharaoh was much superior to them; but when punishment visited them in retribution of their rejection of Moses (sws), then nothing could be of avail to them.
- The Prophet (sws) and his companions are reminded that the trials they are facing at the hands of their opponents should be borne with patience and perseverance; if they staunchly adhere to their view victory will finally be theirs.
- During the course of this account, the character of a true believer belonging to the family of the Pharaoh is also delineated. This delineation of his character teaches a lesson to the Quraysh and it is also very encouraging for those who in spite of having sympathy for the true call were hesitant in expressing and declaring it.

Verses (56-85): The arguments in favour of monotheism and the Hereafter found within man and around him are referred to; the Quraysh are warned in explicit words and a promise of help is made to the Prophet (sws) and his companions in a very definite manner.

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Text and Translation

Section I: Verses (1-22)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

حٰمٓ ﴿۱﴾ تَنۡزِيۡلُ الۡكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡعَلِيۡمِ ﴿۲﴾ غَافِرِ الذَّنۡۢبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوۡبِ شَدِيۡدِ الۡعِقَابِ ۙ ذِى الطَّوۡلِ ؕ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ اِلَيۡهِ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ﴿۳﴾ مَا يُجَادِلُ فِىۡۤ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا فَلَا يَغۡرُرۡكَ تَقَلُّبُهُمۡ فِى الۡبِلَادِ ﴿۴﴾ كَذَّبَتۡ قَبۡلَهُمۡ قَوۡمُ نُوۡحٍ وَّ الۡاَحۡزَابُ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ ۖ وَهَمَّتۡ كُلُّ اُمَّةٍۢ بِرَسُوۡلِهِمۡ لِيَاۡخُذُوۡهُ وَجٰدَلُوۡا بِالۡبَاطِلِ لِيُدۡحِضُوۡا بِهِ الۡحَقَّ فَاَخَذۡتُهُمۡ ۟ فَكَيۡفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿۵﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ حَقَّتۡ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡۤا اَنَّهُمۡ اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ ﴿۶﴾ اَلَّذِيۡنَ يَحۡمِلُوۡنَ الۡعَرۡشَ وَمَنۡ حَوۡلَهٗ يُسَبِّحُوۡنَ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّهِمۡ وَيُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِهٖ وَيَسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡنَ لِلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَسِعۡتَ كُلَّ شَىۡءٍ رَّحۡمَةً وَّعِلۡمًا فَاغۡفِرۡ لِلَّذِيۡنَ تَابُوۡا وَاتَّبَعُوۡا سَبِيۡلَكَ وَقِهِمۡ عَذَابَ الۡجَحِيۡمِ ﴿۷﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاَدۡخِلۡهُمۡ جَنّٰتِ عَدۡنِ ِۨ الَّتِىۡ وَعَدۡتَّهُمۡ وَمَنۡ صَلَحَ مِنۡ اٰبَآئِهِمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجِهِمۡ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمۡ ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ﴿۸﴾ وَقِهِمُ السَّيِّاٰتِ ؕ وَمَنۡ تَقِ السَّيِّاٰتِ يَوۡمَـئِذٍ فَقَدۡ رَحِمۡتَهٗ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ هُوَ الۡفَوۡزُ الۡعَظِيۡمُ ﴿۹﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا يُنَادَوۡنَ لَمَقۡتُ اللّٰهِ اَكۡبَرُ مِنۡ مَّقۡتِكُمۡ اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ اِذۡ تُدۡعَوۡنَ اِلَى الۡاِيۡمَانِ فَتَكۡفُرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ قَالُوۡا رَبَّنَاۤ اَمَتَّنَا اثۡنَتَيۡنِ وَاَحۡيَيۡتَنَا اثۡنَتَيۡنِ فَاعۡتَرَفۡنَا بِذُنُوۡبِنَا فَهَلۡ اِلٰى خُرُوۡجٍ مِّنۡ سَبِيۡلٍ ﴿۱۱﴾ ذٰلِكُمۡ بِاَنَّهٗۤ اِذَا دُعِىَ اللّٰهُ وَحۡدَهٗ كَفَرۡتُمۡ ۚ وَاِنۡ يُّشۡرَكۡ بِهٖ تُؤۡمِنُوۡا ؕ فَالۡحُكۡمُ لِلّٰهِ الۡعَلِىِّ الۡكَبِيۡرِ ﴿۱۲﴾ هُوَ الَّذِىۡ يُرِيۡكُمۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُنَزِّلُ لَكُمۡ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ رِزۡقًا ؕ وَمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ اِلَّا مَنۡ يُّنِيۡبُ ﴿۱۳﴾ فَادۡعُوا اللّٰهَ مُخۡلِصِيۡنَ لَهُ الدِّيۡنَ وَلَوۡ كَرِهَ الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ رَفِيۡعُ الدَّرَجٰتِ ذُو الۡعَرۡشِ ۚ يُلۡقِى الرُّوۡحَ مِنۡ اَمۡرِهٖ عَلٰى مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهٖ لِيُنۡذِرَ يَوۡمَ التَّلَاقِ ﴿۱۵﴾ يَوۡمَ هُمۡ بٰرِزُوۡنَ ۚ لَا يَخۡفٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ مِنۡهُمۡ شَىۡءٌ ؕ لِمَنِ الۡمُلۡكُ الۡيَوۡمَ ؕ لِلّٰهِ الۡوَاحِدِ الۡقَهَّارِ ﴿۱۶﴾ اَلۡيَوۡمَ تُجۡزٰى كُلُّ نَفۡسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتۡ ؕ لَا ظُلۡمَ الۡيَوۡمَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيۡعُ الۡحِسَابِ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَاَنۡذِرۡهُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡاٰزِفَةِ اِذِ الۡقُلُوۡبُ لَدَى الۡحَنَاجِرِ كٰظِمِيۡنَ ؕ مَا لِلظّٰلِمِيۡنَ مِنۡ حَمِيۡمٍ وَّلَا شَفِيۡعٍ يُّطَاعُ ﴿۱۸﴾ يَعۡلَمُ خَآئِنَةَ الۡاَعۡيُنِ وَمَا تُخۡفِى الصُّدُوۡرُ ﴿۱۹﴾ وَاللّٰهُ يَقۡضِىۡ بِالۡحَقِّ ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ لَا يَقۡضُوۡنَ بِشَىۡءٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡبَصِيۡرُ ﴿۲۰﴾ اَوَلَمۡ يَسِيۡرُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَيَنۡظُرُوۡا كَيۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيۡنَ كَانُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ كَانُوۡا هُمۡ اَشَدَّ مِنۡهُمۡ قُوَّةً وَّاٰثَارًا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوۡبِهِمۡ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ وَّاقٍ ﴿۲۱﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ كَانَتۡ تَّاۡتِيۡهِمۡ رُسُلُهُمۡ بِالۡبَيِّنٰتِ فَكَفَرُوۡا فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ قَوِىٌّ شَدِيۡدُ الۡعِقَابِ ﴿۲۲﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

This is Ḥā Mīm. The revelation of this Book is from God, the Mighty One, the All-Knowing, Who forgives sins, accepts repentance, is stern in punishment and is very powerful. There is no god but Him. To Him is the return. (1-3)

None but those who deny reward and punishment are indulging in frivolous talk

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regarding the revelations of God. So, let not their unchecked rambling in the land deceive you. Before them, the people of Noah denied, and so did the factions after them. And each community planned to lay hands on their messenger and indulged in frivolous talk through falsehood in order to defeat the truth; but I smote them, and how stern was My punishment! And thus has word of your Lord been fulfilled concerning those who have committed disbelief; they are about to enter Hell. (4-6)

Those who bear the Throne and those who stand around it give glory to their Lord while celebrating His praises and believe in Him. And they implore forgiveness for those who have embraced faith, saying: "Lord, Your mercy and your knowledge embrace all things; so, forgive those who repent and follow Your path and shield them from the punishment of Hell. And our Lord! Admit them to eternal gardens of Eden which You have promised them; and also those from among their forefathers, spouses and progeny who are worthy of Paradise. Indeed, You are the Mighty, the Wise One. And shield them from the evil consequences of deeds and those whom You shielded on that Day from the evil consequences of deeds are ones whom You had mercy on. And this is indeed supreme triumph. (7-9)

And it will be proclaimed to the disbelievers: "God's aversion to you has remained much greater than the aversion you have now to yourselves when you would be called to embrace faith, but you would commit disbelief." They shall say: "Lord, twice have You gave us death and twice you gave us life; hence we now confess our sins. So, is there any way out from here?" This fate came before you because when you were called to the one and only God, you would deny it; and if partners were associated with Him, you believed in them. So, now the judgment rests with God alone, the Most High, the Supreme One.' (10-12)

It is He who shows His signs to you, and sends down sustenance from the sky for you. Yet none take heed except the attentive. So, call God alone with true obedience to Him, however much the disbelievers may dislike it. Exalted is He, Master of the throne. He sends the spirit which is among His matters to whomsoever servant He chooses so that He may warn them of the day of meeting; the day when they shall be totally exposed before their Lord. None of their things will be hidden from God. Who shall reign supreme today? God, the One, the Almighty. Today every soul shall be recompensed according to what it did. Today no injustice shall take place. Swift indeed is God's reckoning. (13-17)

And forewarn them of the approaching calamity when hearts will get stuck in the throats and they will be choked with sorrow. On that Day, neither will be there any sympathizer for the wrongdoers nor any intercessor whose pleading shall be heard. He knows the furtive look and the secrets also which hearts conceal. And God will judge with fairness. And those whom they invoke besides God will judge nothing. God alone hears all and observes all. (18-20)

Have these people never journeyed through the land so that they could have seen the fate of those who have gone before them? They were far greater than them in prowess

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and in the signs which they have left in the earth. Thus God seized them for their sins, and none could save them from His grasp. This was because their messengers would come to them with open signs and they denied them. So, God seized them. Indeed, He is Mighty and stern retribution. (21-22)

Explanation

حٰمٓ ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ غَافِرِ الذَّنْۢبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ شَدِيْدِ الْعِقَابِ ۙ ذِى الطَّوْلِ ۭ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۭ اِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٣﴾[1]

Ḥām Mīm is the Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah*. A detailed discussion on the abbreviated letters was done at the beginning of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here, this much needs to be kept in mind that this *sūrah* and all the remaining Makkan *sūrahs* of in this group share this name and the mood of each one of them is also the same.

The words تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ portray a favour as well as sound an admonition to the opponents of the Qur'ān. The implication is that if the Almighty has revealed this Book with such a thorough and elaborate arrangement, then the purpose is that people should give it due importance, receive guidance from it and be grateful for this thorough arrangement of the Almighty for providing them with guidance. Otherwise, they should remember that He is Mighty (عَزِيْز) as well as All-Knowing (عَلِيْم). Since He is Mighty, He has power and control over everything; He can give all kinds of punishment both in this world and in the next to the opponents of the Qur'ān and no one can stop Him from this. Besides being Mighty, He is also All-knowing; Hence, He fully knows which phase is the tussle that has ensued because of the elaborate revelation of this Book; He also knows the way those people who are presenting this Book are being treated as well as the intentions of those who are at the forefront of opposing it; He is also aware where these intentions have reached and when it is essential to stop them. In other words, this Book is not the request of a petitioner; it is a scripture of guidance revealed by the Mighty and All-Knowing God; hence, siding by it carries a lot of significance and opposing it also carries severe and far reaching consequences.

God has mentioned His attributes in the words غَافِرِ الذَّنْۢبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ شَدِيْدِ الْعِقَابِ ۙ ذِى الطَّوْلِ: He is one Who forgives, accepts repentance, is stern in retribution and is also Mighty. The word طَوْل means "blessing, self-sufficience, might and gift." I have preferred the meaning of "might" keeping in view the contrasting style found in the verse.

The implication is that God has both these types of attributes and vested in Him are both types of authority. So it is up to everyone to decide his course of action: he can either accept this Book and expect to be forgiven by God's mercy or oppose it and wait for His punishment and power to manifest themselves.

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1. This is Hā Mīm. The revelation of this Book is from God, the Mighty One, the All-Knowing, Who forgives sins, accepts repentance, is stern in punishment and is very powerful. There is no god but Him. To Him is the return.

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The words لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۭ اِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ refer to the fact that if anyone is under the misconception that there is someone other than God who is worthy of worship then he should remove this misconception. No once except God is worthy of worship. On the Day of Judgement, everyone shall return to Him, and all their matters shall be decided by Him. Neither will this return be to anyone else nor will anyone else intercede without God's permission.

مَا يُجَادِلُ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَلَا يَغْرُرْكَ تَقَلُّبُهُمْ فِي الْبِلَادِ ۝[2]

The expression اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ refers to the verses of the Book whose revelation is referred to in verse two. By referring it to as اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ its aspect of being a conclusive argument is highlighted.

The words الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا refer to those people who had denied the punishment which the Qur'ān was informing them of. It is mentioned at a number of instances in the Qur'ān that when the messengers of God warned them of God's punishment they regarded it to be a bluff and on the basis of their worldly successes rejected this warning and made fun of it.

This verse refers to this aspect. It assures the Prophet (sws) and through him the Muslims that the frivolous talk people are engaging in while opposing the Qur'ān are the ones who have rejected its warnings of punishment. It is weighing down heavily on their conceit that if they reject this Book and the one to whom it was revealed some punishment will visit them. Because of their arrogance and haughtiness they do not want to accept this fact and since they find themselves to be successful and affluent in life they make fun of it; however, no one should be misled by their current affluence: history bears witness that there were many a nation which the Almighty seized at their peak and they could not save themselves.

Though the words فَلَا يَغْرُرْكَ تَقَلُّبُهُمْ فِي الْبِلَادِ apparently address the Prophet (sws) yet the rebuke and anger found in them is directed at the rejecters of the Quraysh who inebriated with the pride of their power and authority were not unable to understand that a punishment can visit them. The repeated warnings of the Qur'ān only made them wonder that why would they be punished and from where would this punishment come.

The word يَغْرُرْكَ means "walking about and coming and going freely." Occasion can also incorporate the meaning of arrogance and conceit in it. I have tried to keep this aspect in consideration.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ وَّالْاَحْزَابُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ۠ وَهَمَّتْ كُلُّ اُمَّةٍۢ بِرَسُوْلِهِمْ لِيَاْخُذُوْهُ وَجٰدَلُوْا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوْا بِهِ

2. None but those who deny reward and punishment are indulging in frivolous talk regarding the revelations of God. So, let not their unchecked rambling in the land deceive you.

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الْحَقَّ فَاَخَذْتُهُمْ ۖ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿٥﴾[3]

This verse presents historical evidence on what is said in the previous verse: before these Quraysh, first the people of Noah (sws) and then subsequent nations (reference being to the people of 'Ād and the Thamūd etc) also denied their respective messengers and each nation wanted to lay their hands on its messenger and tried to defeat his cause through their frivolous talk. However, before they could seize their messenger, they were seized by God and what a stern manner did He seize them in. This is evident from God's attribute شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَاب (stern in retribution) and the purpose of using the word عِقَاب here to connote punishment is to point that God sends His punishment to such rebellious people is because of a natural consequence of their deeds; it is certainly no injustice or oppression to them. Hence, one should learn a lesson from their fate; but they are certainly not worthy of sympathy.

This verse indicates that this *sūrah* was revealed at the time when the leaders of the Quraysh were consulting one another to lay their hands on the Prophet (sws). The Qur'ān has informed them that if they have such intentions, they should fully contemplate its consequences. The assurance found in this verse for the Prophet (sws) and his companions does not need any elaboration.

وَكَذٰلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ﴿٦﴾[4]

The expression كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ refers to the كلمة العذاب mentioned in verse 71 of Sūrah al-Zumar earlier, ie. the overall decision of the Almighty that He communicated in response to the challenge of Satan. This decision was that those who while leaving the path of God follow Satan shall all be gathered in Hell. The verse under discussion says that just as this decision of God was fulfilled for the previous nations, it has also been fulfilled for these disbelievers of the Quraysh and they too shall be cast into Hell. In other words, the Prophet (sws) is directed to carry out his obligation; whatever fate has been ordained for these people shall be encountered by them. Since the punishment of God is the first step to Hell, hence this punishment is signified by the word Hell.

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَحْمِلُوْنَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهٗ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَّعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَاتَّبَعُوْا سَبِيْلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٧﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنِ ِالَّتِيْ وَعَدْتَّهُمْ وَ

3. Before them, the people of Noah denied, and so did the factions after them. And each community planned to lay hands on their messenger and indulged in frivolous talk through falsehood in order to defeat the truth; but I smote them, and how stern was My punishment!

4. And thus has the word of your Lord been fulfilled concerning those who have committed disbelief; they are about to enter Hell.

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مَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ اٰبَآىِٕهِمْ وَ اَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَ ذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝ وَقِهِمُ السَّيِّاٰتِ ؕ وَ مَنْ تَقِ السَّيِّاٰتِ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمْتَهٗ ؕ وَ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ۝[5]

These verses state that if these people depend on the recommendations of the angels and on its basis are denying the warnings of the Prophet (sws), they should listen carefully: even the favoured angels of God who lift His throne continue to remain fearful and afraid of Him and remain busy in extolling Him and celebrating His praises; so one can only imagine of the rest of the angels.

The words وَيُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ point to the fact that these angels are not inflicted with the claim of divinity; on the contrary, like the servants of God, they profess faith in Him.

Similarly, the words وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا highlight the fact that these angels continue to seek repentance for people who profess faith in God so that God may shield them from the punishment of this world and the next. In other words, this seeking of forgiveness by them is their recommendation and is reserved for the believers.

This state of fear of the angels and their seeking forgiveness for the believers can be seen in the last verse of the previous *sūrah* and occurs in Sūrah Shūrā as well in the following words:

تَكَادُ السَّمٰوٰتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ. (٤٢: ٥)

The heavens are almost ripping apart from above, and the angels glorify the name of their Lord celebrating His praise, and seek repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. (42:5)

The purpose of mentioning this state of fear of the angels is to inform people who think that so favoured are they to God and so much influence do they have on Him that they will not allow their worshippers to be seized by God come what may. They should remain informed that the angels are not inflicted with any such conceited notion. On the contrary, they are in a perpetual state of submission to God and seek refuge from His anger and wrath.

The words رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَّعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَاتَّبَعُوْا سَبِيْلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيْمِ explain the

5. Those who bear the Throne and those who stand around it give glory to their Lord while celebrating His praises and believe in Him. And they implore forgiveness for those who have embraced faith, saying: "Lord, Your mercy and your knowledge embrace all things; so, forgive those who repent and follow Your path and shield them from the punishment of Hell. And our Lord! Admit them to eternal gardens of Eden which You have promised them; and also those from among their forefathers, spouses and progeny who are worthy of Paradise. Indeed, You are the Mighty, the Wise One. And shield them from the evil consequences of deeds and those whom You shielded on that Day from the evil consequences of deeds are ones whom You had mercy on. And this is indeed supreme triumph.

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seeking of forgiveness by the angels: they do not speak to their Lord as if they have some say in matters under His jurisdiction; on the contrary, they consign every matter to the mercy and knowledge of God because both are so profound that they embrace everything. For this reason, the Almighty will deal with each person according to the requisites of His mercy and knowledge. With this belief, they request forgiveness for those people who repent from their sins and after reforming themselves follow the path of God. In other words, the angels continue to pray and advocate but this prayer and advocacy is reserved for those who repent from their evil beliefs and practices belonging to the *jāhiliyyah* period and become followers of the path of God. This is not for those who are the enemies of the Messenger and his religion.

The words رَبَّنَا وَاَدۡخِلۡهُمۡ جَنّٰتِ عَدۡنِ ِالَّتِیۡ وَعَدۡتَّهُمۡ وَمَنۡ صَلَحَ مِنۡ اٰبَآئِهِمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجِهِمۡ وَذُرِّیّٰتِهِمۡ ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَكِیۡمُ further explain this seeking of forgiveness by the angels: they pray that such people be granted Paradise who become worthy of it by repenting and reforming themselves and for whom God has promised Paradise. Moreover, these angels pray for only those among the forefathers, wives and progeny of the believers who become worthy of it by repenting and reforming themselves. What is implied in other words is that Paradise is not something which will be bestowed on someone merely because of one's relationship to someone or because of one's family or lineage; on the contrary, only those people will enter it who deserve it and who earn the blessings of the Almighty.

The sentence اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَكِیۡمُ is an expression of intercession which is also cited through the tongue of Jesus (sws) in verse 120 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. It has been explained there. These words consign matters to God: He can do whatever He wants to; however, since God is also wise, He will only do that which is based on His wisdom and justice. This seeking of forgiveness by the angels is in fact their recommendation for the inhabitants of the earth, and its nature is the one which the Qur'ān has stated and not one what these ignorant people have understood.

In وَقِهِمُ السَّیِّاٰتِ ؕ وَمَنۡ تَقِ السَّیِّاٰتِ یَوۡمَىِٕذٍ فَقَدۡ رَحِمۡتَهٗ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ هُوَ الۡفَوۡزُ الۡعَظِیۡمُ the word السَّیِّاٰتِ (sins) refers to its consequences. To convey the outcome of an action, at times, a verb is used to connote its consequence. In other words, the angels pray to God to protect the believers from the evil consequences of their sins ie. brush away their sins so that they are protected from their evil.

The words وَمَنۡ تَقِ السَّیِّاٰتِ یَوۡمَىِٕذٍ فَقَدۡ رَحِمۡتَهٗ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ هُوَ الۡفَوۡزُ الۡعَظِیۡمُ of angels point to the dreadful nature of the Day of Accountability. To them, the real fortunate are people whom the Almighty protected from the consequences of their sins; this to them is the greatest success and the real fortunate are the ones who achieve this success.

As referred to earlier, the purpose of mentioning this seeking of forgiveness by the angels is to explain that they continuously present their recommendations to God in favour of the believers. However, the nature of this recommendation is the one stated and not the one on the basis of which people have become unafraid of the Hereafter,

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and when they are reminded of the actual reality they are impelled to debate and confrontation.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنَادَوْنَ لَمَقْتُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ مِن مَّقْتِكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ إِذْ تُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ فَتَكْفُرُونَ ﴿١٠﴾[6]

This verse implies that people have pinned their hopes on their recommenders who they think will secure for them the highest place before God; however, in the Hereafter, they will be informed by a proclamation that the extent of wrath and anger the Almighty had on them when they would be called through the messengers and they would arrogantly reject it would be much more than the sorrow and anger they will have at that time on their misfortune and deprivation and on the crooked thoughts and erroneous state of their leaders. The implication is that they will now have to bear the consequences of their arrogance and of the wrath and anger of God and mourn their misfortune. No one is now present to help them. Whatever has come before them has come after the truth has been conclusively conveyed to them from the Almighty; they deserve only this.

The words لَمَقْتُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ are the locus of إِذْ تُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ. Faith here specially refers to faith in *tawḥīd*. This is because only that faith is acceptable to God which exists with *tawḥīd*. It has been stated in verse 45 of Sūrah al-Zumar that the greatest aversion which the rejecters have is for the call of *tawḥīd*. In this *sūrah* too, it has been explained in verse 12 ahead that this anger of God on them would be because when they were called to *tawḥīd*, they showed aversion to it and fondly accepted *shirk* (polytheism).

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَتَّنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَأَحْيَيْتَنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَاعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا فَهَلْ إِلَى خُرُوجٍ مِّن سَبِيلٍ ﴿١١﴾[7]

On the Day of Judgement, these people will very obediently and clearly acknowledge their sins. They would say that they did think that raising the dead back to life was something impossible and for this reason while being unafraid of accountability they made fun of His messenger and His call. They would go on to say that now that after the Almighty has given them death twice and life also twice and thus made them clearly observe life after death, is there a way out from Hell so that they can go afresh to the previous world and lead a life of faith and righteous deeds? Twice giving death refers first to the state in which human beings were before this world was created and second to the death which every living person is destined to face. Similarly, twice giving life refers first to the life of this world and second to the

6. And it will be proclaimed to the disbelievers: "God's aversion to you has remained much greater than the aversion you have now to your selves when you would be called to embrace faith, but you would commit disbelief."

7. They shall say: "Lord, twice have You gave us death and twice you gave us life; hence we now confess our sins. So, is there any way out from here?"

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life of the next world.

ذٰلِكُمْ بِاَنَّهٗٓ اِذَا دُعِيَ اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهٗ كَفَرْتُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّشْرَكْ بِهٖ تُؤْمِنُوْا ۭ فَالْحُكْمُ لِلّٰهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْكَبِيْرِ ﴿۱۲﴾[8]

This verse alludes to the answer which will be given to these people by the Almighty: whatever they have encountered was the result of their stubbornness and obduracy; when they were called to *tawḥīd*, they would run away from it and remain ardent supporters of *shirk*; so now the decision rests with the Almighty and this decision is nothing but what they are now facing.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُنَزِّلُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاۗءِ رِزْقًا ۭ وَمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ اِلَّا مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ ﴿۱۳﴾[9]

The verse implies that both mercy and calamity are in God's hands. Hence one should fear Him alone and pin hopes in Him only. He keeps showing both these aspects of His might. It is He Who makes us observe thunder and lightning in the sky and it is He alone Who sends down rain that opens all doors of sustenance and blessings of the earth. This is a clear proof of the fact that both the heavens and the earth are in the control of one God. The thunder of punishment is in His hands and so are the treasures of sustenance and nutrition.

The words وَمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ اِلَّا مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ imply that both these facets of God keep manifesting themselves to remind and instruct people; however, benefiting from them depends on the fact that a person is inclined to observe them and also has a discerning mind. If a person becomes so blind in following his desires that he does not have the courage to look at other things and learn a lesson from them, then the greatest of signs cannot open the eyes of such a person.

فَادْعُوا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾[10]

This verse addresses the Muslims. It says that if these Idolaters are not prepared to open their eyes and show aversion to the belief of *tawḥīd* presented to them by the Muslims and fight with them, then they should now not show any concern to them; in contrast to them, Muslims should only call upon God without associating anyone with Him and worship Him with purity of obedience.

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8. This fate came before you because when you were called to the one and only God, you would deny it; and if partners were associated with Him, you believed in them. So now the judgment rests with God alone, the Most High, the Supreme One.

9. It is He who shows His signs to you, and sends down sustenance from the sky for you. Yet none take heed except the attentive.

10. So, call God alone with true obedience to Him, however much the disbelievers may dislike it.

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رَفِيْعُ الدَّرَجٰتِ ذُو الْعَرْشِ ۚ يُلْقِي الرُّوْحَ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ لِيُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ ﴿١٥﴾[11]

The Almighty has an exalted status and is the master of the throne that governs all the universe. No one can access Him. The deities whom these idolaters have regarded as His associates and favoured ones have only been invented by them and have no basis. The court of God is beyond the access of all.

The word الرُّوْحَ in يُلْقِي الرُّوْحَ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ here connotes "divine revelation." The reason why divine revelation is signified by this word is obvious: just as the spirit (رُوح) gives life to the body, in a similar manner divine revelation gives life, warmth and light to the heart and intellect. Jesus (sws) has referred to this in the following words: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God," (Matthew, 4:4). The attribute مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ highlights the fact that this divine revelation is from among the matters of God whose full nature and form cannot be understood by every person. Only he understands it who sends it or he who experiences it. This fact is explained at another place in the following words: وَيَسْئَلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الرُّوْحِ ۭ قُلِ الرُّوْحُ مِنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّيْ وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا. (۱۷:۸۵) (And they ask you about *al-rūḥ*. Tell them: "This *al-rūḥ* is from among my Lord's command. Little indeed is the knowledge given to you," (17:85)). Readers may look my explanation of the above cited verses.

The purpose of the words of the verse under discussion is that the exalted and lofty presence of the Almighty cannot be accessed by any man or jinn so that they may be able to be informed of some of His secret. The only way through which His will can be known is divine revelation which he sends to those among His servants who He selects for this special purpose. In other words, the means which these idolaters have invented to eavesdrop on the secrets of the unknown are absolutely baseless. The only way to know of God's likes and dislikes is divine revelation, which the Almighty sends down to His messengers yet these wretched people have become enemies of the Qur'ān and its presenter. Their over-weaning pride has led them to conclude that if God was to make someone as His messenger, he should have been from among them. They do not know that God selects for this position whomsoever He wants, and the one He selects really deserves to be selected; not every claimant is worthy of it.

In لِيُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ the expression يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ refers to the Day of Judgement because on that Day everyone is to appear before their Lord. The real purpose of divine revelation and prophethood is to inform people of this Day. This is the real issue which needs to be understood. If it is understood, the door to understand all other issues is opened. If this is not understood, a person cannot take a single step in the right direction. So the real mission of the messengers of God is to guide people to this destination.

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11. Exalted is He, Master of the throne. He sends the spirit which is among His matters to whomsoever servant He chooses so that He may warn them of the day of meeting.

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يَوْمَ هُمْ بٰرِزُوْنَ ۚ لَا يَخْفٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ ۭ لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ۭ لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ ﴿١٦﴾[12]

The inner and outer self of every person will be exposed before God on that Day. Nothing will remain hidden from God so that any witness or evidence is needed or that someone may tell a lie or hide any of his blemishes or wrongly justify it or present a false recommendation for it.

On that Day, when everyone will be totally exposed and helpless before God, people will be addressed by the words لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ (Speak up! To whom belongs the sovereignty today). Where are those intercessors and deities which these idolaters had set up as partners of God and thought that they would save them from God?

Since they will have no answer to give at that time, the Qur'ān gave the answer itself by the words: لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ (Today sovereignty belongs to God alone, the One the Almighty). At that time, no one will be able to be a friend to another nor be able to change a decision of God. I have already presented my research on the word قَهَّارِ at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۭ لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٧﴾[13]

The verse implies: today is the day when the justice of the Almighty will completely manifest itself; today everyone will be rewarded or punished according to his deeds; none will be wronged or treated unjustly and all this will happen in the blink of an eye. No one should wrongly conceive that this will take a lot of time; God is very quick in taking account.

وَاَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْاٰزِفَةِ اِذِ الْقُلُوْبُ لَدَى الْحَنَاجِرِ كٰظِمِيْنَ ۭ مَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ حَمِيْمٍ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٍ يُّطَاعُ ﴿١٨﴾[14]

The word الْاٰزِفَةِ means "that which has come near." Here it is used for the Day of Judgement. The reason for using this attribute of this Day is that people should not think that it is far off; it is very near as is depicted in the following narrative: مَنْ مَاتَ فَقَدْ قَامَتْ قِيَامَتُهُ (he who dies, his day of judgement has arrived).[15] On the Day of Judgement, no one will be able to feel the time which has lapsed between him and the arrival of its time; each person will think that he had just slept a while ago and now woken up. In other words, this would mean that the time that is left for the Day of

12. The day when they shall be totally exposed before their Lord. None of their things will be hidden from God. Who shall reign supreme today? God, the One, the Almighty.

13. Today every soul shall be recompensed according to what it did. Today no injustice shall take place. Swift indeed is God's reckoning.

14. And forewarn them of the approaching calamity when hearts will get stuck in the throats and they will be choked with sorrow. On that day; neither will be there any sympathizer for the wrongdoers nor any intercessor whose pleading shall be heard.

15. See, for example: Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnah Dimashq*, vol. 37, 214.

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Judgement of a person is the time of his life that he is to spend in this world; just as each person's death stands close by, similarly, the Day of Judgement too is at hand.

Another aspect of the word الْاٰزِفَةِ is that a nation to whom a messenger is sent faces the verdict of the court of God. If the nation denies the messenger, then it is necessarily destroyed. This destruction is like a lesser day of judgement which is like a prelude to the greater day of judgement. Thus this word is meant to admonish the Quraysh that they should not regard the Day of Judgement to be far off; its court is about to be set up; it will soon deliver its verdict. At the same time, they should wait for the court of the final day which will give a final verdict in all matters.

The words اِذِ الْقُلُوْبُ لَدَى الْحَنَاجِرِ كٰظِمِيْنَ ؕ مَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ حَمِيْمٍ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٍ يُّطَاعُ depict the horrific nature of the Day: it will be as if the hearts of the sinners have reached their throats, and they will be stricken with grief and sorrow; neither will voice come out from the throat of a person to defend him nor will they have any sympathizer or recommender who can utter a word in their support.

The word شَفِيْعٍ is qualified by the adjective: يُّطَاعُ to refute a claim of the idolaters. They thought that their deities were so dear and near to God that to pamper and cajole them He would necessarily accept what they ask for. This word implies that these people will have no recommender on that Day who has any say.

يَعْلَمُ خَآئِنَةَ الْاَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُوْرُ ﴿١٩﴾[16]

Any recommendation in favour of someone can only be effective for someone who is not aware of the whole situation himself. The Almighty is aware of every small or big secret of every individual; He even has knowledge of furtive glances and secrets hidden in the hearts; so how can a recommendation have any weight before Him.

وَاللّٰهُ يَقْضِيْ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ لَا يَقْضُوْنَ بِشَيْءٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ ﴿٢٠﴾[17]

As far as this is concerned that a recommendation can turn a falsehood into truth and vice versa, then there is no possibility of this either. Every decision of God will be according to the truth and no one through his intercession or recommendation can turn God's just decision into an unjust one.

The words وَالَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ لَا يَقْضُوْنَ بِشَيْءٍ imply that as far as the false deities of the idolaters are concerned, they will not have any authority whatsoever to decide any thing so that they would be able to speak against or in defence of someone.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ substantiate what is said above: when the being who really sees and hears is God, who else can have the right to make a judgement, and

16. He knows the furtive look and the secrets also which hearts conceal.

17. And God will judge with fairness. And those whom they invoke besides God will judge nothing. God alone hears all and observes all.

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when sees and hears all, how is it possible that a person through his recommendation can deceive God and lead Him to make a wrong judgement. Moreover, these false deities can neither see nor hear. So on what basis is it understood that they too will be able to judge in any matter of a person.

اَوَلَمۡ يَسِيۡرُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَيَنۡظُرُوۡا كَيۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيۡنَ كَانُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ كَانُوۡا هُمۡ اَشَدَّ مِنۡهُمۡ قُوَّةً وَّاٰثَارًا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوۡبِهِمۡ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ وَّاقٍ ﴿۲۱﴾[18]

This is a threat in unequivocal words to the Quraysh: if they are being so audacious enough to reject the warnings of the Prophet (sws), have they never journeyed through this land to see the fate met by their predecessor nations – which were much stronger and mightier than they and were also superior to them in their feats of constructing structures and in their culture and civilization? However, when the Almighty seized them in retribution of their sins, neither did their power and numerical strength could be of any avail to them nor did their advancements in architecture and civilization could be of any benefit to them nor did their idols and deities which they regarded as their supporters and helpers could protect them. This reference is to the people of the 'Ād, Thamūd and Madyan etc the details of whose power, numerical strength and architectural and cultural feats have been cited in the previous *sūrahs*.

Here, the word اَشَدَّ also encompasses the meaning of اَعۡظَم (greater) and اَكۡثَر (more in number). For this reason, a mention of آثَارًا with قُوَّةً is very appropriate. The word آثَارًا refers to signs related to cultural advancements and architectural feats. It is these signs which are always regarded by the world to be marks of majesty and grandeur of nations. However, it is evident from the Qur'ān that if a nation is devoid of faith, then these signs become manifestations of its downfall and decadence and ultimately these signs become tombs of its collective existence.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ كَانَتۡ تَّاۡتِيۡهِمۡ رُسُلُهُمۡ بِالۡبَيِّنٰتِ فَكَفَرُوۡا فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ قَوِىٌّ شَدِيۡدُ الۡعِقَابِ ﴿۲۲﴾[19]

This is a delineation of the reason for the destruction of these nations: the messengers of God came to them with very clear signs; however, inebriated with their power and strength and worldly successes they did not pay any heed to the warnings sounded by their respective messenger. Finally, they were seized by the Almighty and when this happened they could not set themselves free from His grasp. God is

18. Have these people never journeyed through the land so that they could have seen the fate of those who have gone before them. They were far greater than them in prowess and in the signs which they have left in the earth. Thus God seized them for their sins, and none could save them from His grasp.

19. This was because their messengers would come to them with open signs and they denied them. So, God seized them. Indeed, He is Mighty and stern retribution.

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powerful and stern in retribution. No technique or method can avail a person when He is seized by God.

Section II: Verses (23-55)

In this section, the anecdote of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh is narrated. The purpose of citing it is to substantiate the claim mentioned in the previous verse: when a messenger is sent to a nation and it denies him, then it is necessarily destroyed however much it may be superior with regard to majesty, grandeur and architectural feats and cultural advancements. This anecdote is meant to assure the Prophet (sws) and his companions; they should exercise patience and continue to carry out their obligation; the leaders and chiefs of the Quraysh too will meet this fate if they do not mend their ways. At the same time, the tale of a member of the Pharaoh's family who was a true believer is also narrated. For a long period of time, he hid his faith due to the circumstances he was facing; however, when he saw that Moses (sws) and his preaching were facing a decisive and final danger, he came out in the open and went all out to support Moses (sws).

The lessons hidden in the anecdote of this true believer will be explained in the exegesis of the respective verses. Here some of its important aspects need to be kept in mind.

This anecdote has been recounted before the leaders of the Quraysh to inform them that true sincerity for one's nation is the one shown by this true believer and not one which they conceitedly think. When he saw that his nation was treading the path of doom, he while rising above all his personal interests endangered his own self by coming forward and attempting to stop it from this fateful behaviour. On the other hand, the leaders of the Quraysh are spending all their strength to push their nation to the punishment of God.

People who as yet had hidden their faith because of some expediency were conveyed through this anecdote that in matters of faith expediency is considerable when the purpose is to protect faith and to make sure of the welfare of the Muslims. If faith and the faithful face a decisive danger in this regard, then it is essential to throw away all expediencies and come out in the open much like what did this true believer did.

Weak and oppressed Muslims are taught and guided through this anecdote by informing them that those who endanger their lives for the cause of truth like this true believer will find God to be their helper and supporter.

Readers may now recite the coming verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢٣﴾ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَقَارُوْنَ فَقَالُوْا سٰحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ

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بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا اقْتُلُوْٓا اَبْنَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ وَاسْتَحْيُوْا نِسَآءَهُمْ ؕ وَمَا كَيْدُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَقَالَ
فِرْعَوْنُ ذَرُوْنِيْٓ اَقْتُلْ مُوْسٰى وَلْيَدْعُ رَبَّهٗ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اَنْ يُّبَدِّلَ دِيْنَكُمْ اَوْ اَنْ يُّظْهِرَ فِي الْاَرْضِ الْفَسَادَ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰٓى اِنِّيْ
عُذْتُ بِرَبِّيْ وَرَبِّكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ﴿۲۷﴾ وَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ ۖ مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ اِيْمَانَهٗٓ اَتَقْتُلُوْنَ
رَجُلًا اَنْ يَّقُوْلَ رَبِّيَ اللّٰهُ وَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّكُ كَاذِبًا فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهٗ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُ صَادِقًا يُّصِبْكُمْ بَعْضُ
الَّذِيْ يَعِدُكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِيْ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴿۲۸﴾ يٰقَوْمِ لَكُمُ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ظٰهِرِيْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۫ فَمَنْ يَّنْصُرُنَا مِنْۢ
بَاْسِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ جَآءَنَا ؕ قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ مَآ اُرِيْكُمْ اِلَّا مَآ اَرٰى وَمَآ اَهْدِيْكُمْ اِلَّا سَبِيْلَ الرَّشَادِ ﴿۲۹﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَ يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْٓ
اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّثْلَ يَوْمِ الْاَحْزَابِ ﴿۳۰﴾ مِثْلَ دَاْبِ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعِبَادِ
﴿۳۱﴾ وَيٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ ﴿۳۲﴾ يَوْمَ تُوَلُّوْنَ مُدْبِرِيْنَ ۚ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ
مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ يُوْسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّا جَآءَكُمْ بِهٖ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَّبْعَثَ
اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ رَسُوْلًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُّرْتَابُ ۖ ﴿۳۴﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطٰنٍ اَتٰىهُمْ ؕ كَبُرَ
مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ قَلْبِ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ ﴿۳۵﴾ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يٰهَامٰنُ ابْنِ لِيْ
صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اَبْلُغُ الْاَسْبَابَ ﴿۳۶﴾ اَسْبَابَ السَّمٰوٰتِ فَاَطَّلِعَ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِ مُوْسٰى وَاِنِّيْ لَاَظُنُّهٗ كَاذِبًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِفِرْعَوْنَ سُوْٓءُ
عَمَلِهٖ وَصُدَّ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ ؕ وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ تَبَابٍ ﴿۳۷﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَ يٰقَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوْنِ اَهْدِكُمْ سَبِيْلَ الرَّشَادِ ۚ ﴿۳۸﴾
يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّمَا هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ ۫ وَّاِنَّ الْاٰخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ ﴿۳۹﴾ مَنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً فَلَا يُجْزٰٓى اِلَّا مِثْلَهَا ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ
صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ يُرْزَقُوْنَ فِيْهَا بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿۴۰﴾ وَيٰقَوْمِ مَا لِيْٓ اَدْعُوْكُمْ اِلَى
النَّجٰوةِ وَتَدْعُوْنَنِيْٓ اِلَى النَّارِ ﴿۴۱﴾ تَدْعُوْنَنِيْ لِاَكْفُرَ بِاللّٰهِ وَاُشْرِكَ بِهٖ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۫ وَّاَنَا اَدْعُوْكُمْ اِلَى الْعَزِيْزِ الْغَفَّارِ
﴿۴۲﴾ لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّمَا تَدْعُوْنَنِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ لَيْسَ لَهٗ دَعْوَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ وَاَنَّ مَرَدَّنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَاَنَّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ هُمْ اَصْحٰبُ
النَّارِ ﴿۴۳﴾ فَسَتَذْكُرُوْنَ مَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ ؕ وَاُفَوِّضُ اَمْرِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿۴۴﴾

فَوَقٰىهُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِ مَا مَكَرُوْا وَحَاقَ بِاٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوْٓءُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿۴۵﴾ اَلنَّارُ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَّعَشِيًّا ۚ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ
السَّاعَةُ ۫ اَدْخِلُوْٓا اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ اَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ ﴿۴۶﴾ وَاِذْ يَتَحَآجُّوْنَ فِي النَّارِ فَيَقُوْلُ الضُّعَفٰٓؤُا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا
فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّغْنُوْنَ عَنَّا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ النَّارِ ﴿۴۷﴾ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا اِنَّا كُلٌّ فِيْهَآ ۙ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ حَكَمَ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ ﴿۴۸﴾ وَقَالَ
الَّذِيْنَ فِي النَّارِ لِخَزَنَةِ جَهَنَّمَ ادْعُوْا رَبَّكُمْ يُخَفِّفْ عَنَّا يَوْمًا مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ ﴿۴۹﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَوَلَمْ تَكُ تَاْتِيْكُمْ رُسُلُكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ؕ قَالُوْا
بَلٰى ؕ قَالُوْا فَادْعُوْا ۚ وَمَا دُعٰٓؤُا الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ ﴿۵۰﴾ اِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ
الْاَشْهَادُ ﴿۵۱﴾ يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ مَعْذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ ﴿۵۲﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْهُدٰى وَاَوْرَثْنَا بَنِيْٓ

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اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ الۡكِتٰبَ ﴿۵۳﴾ هُدًى وَّذِكۡرٰى لِاُولِى الۡاَلۡبَابِ ﴿۵۴﴾ فَاصۡبِرۡ اِنَّ وَعۡدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّاسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لِذَنۡۢبِكَ وَسَبِّحۡ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّكَ بِالۡعَشِىِّ وَالۡاِبۡكَارِ ﴿۵۵﴾

And We sent forth Moses with Our signs and with a clear proof to the Pharaoh, Hāmān, and Qarūn. But they said: "He is a sorcerer, a liar." And when he brought them the truth from Ourself, they said: "Slay the sons of those who share his faith, and spare only their women." And the ploy of these disbelievers ended up in futility. (23-25)

And the Pharaoh said: "Let me slay Moses, and then let him invoke his God! I fear that he might change your religion and spread rebellion in the land." Moses said: "I take refuge with my Lord and your Lord from the evil of every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning." (26-27)

But a believer from the Pharaoh's kinsmen, who had hidden his faith, said: "Would you slay a man merely because he says: 'my Lord is God?' even though he has also brought to you very clear signs from your Lord. And if he is lying, then its evil consequences will afflict none but him. And if he is speaking the truth, a part at least of what he is threatening you with will smite you. God will not let him succeed who is a blatant liar and a transgressor. O People of My Nation! Today sovereignty is with you and you are dominant in the land; but who will save us from the torment of God if it visits us?" The Pharaoh said: "I am informing you of my calculated opinion and am guiding you towards exactly the straight path." (28-29)

And he who had embraced faith said: "O People of My Nation! I fear the same punishment will befall you as what befell the factions; for example, the punishment which befell the people of Noah, the 'Ād, and the Thamūd, and those who came after them. And God does not seek to wrong His servants in any way – O People of My Nation! I fear for you the Day of cries and shouts. The Day you will turn and flee and there will be none to save you from God. And he whom God leads astray shall have none to guide him. And before this, Joseph came to you with clear teachings, but you only kept doubting what he brought until when he died you thought that after him God will never send another messenger." In this manner does God lead astray those who exceed bounds and are afflicted with doubts. (30-34)

Those who dispute God's revelations without any argument that has reached them are deeply hated by God and by the believers. In this manner does God seal the heart of every arrogant tyrant. (35)

The Pharaoh said: "O Hāmān! Build me a tower that I may reach the borders – the borders of the heavens that I may peep upon the Lord of Moses; I regard him to be a complete liar." And in this manner, the misdeeds of the Pharaoh were endeared to him and he was stopped from the straight path. And the ploy of the Pharaoh ended up in failure. (36-37)

And he who had embraced faith said: "My people! Follow me; I am guiding you to

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the right path. My people! The life of this world is but a fleeting pleasure; the real abode is the life to come. He who commits an evil shall receive in exchange what is similar to it and he who does a good deed, whether man or woman, and is also a true believer, then it is such people who will enter Paradise where they receive innumerable blessings. And my people! What is the matter; I call you towards salvation and you call me to the Fire? You bid me reject God and associate partners with Him of which I know nothing. And I call you to the Almighty, the Forgiving One. Indeed, the ones to whom you call me to neither have a say in this world nor in the next. And all of us have to return to God. And those who transgress bounds are the ones who shall be the inmates of Hell. So soon you will recall the things I am telling you, and I consign my matter to God. Indeed, He is watching over His servants. (38-44)

Thus God delivered him from the evil consequences of their ploys and My punishment surrounded the Pharaoh's people. Before the Fire they are brought morning and evening, and on the day the Hereafter arrives, it will be ordered: "Admit Pharaoh's people into a horrific torment!" (45-46)

And when they will argue with one another in Hell, those who remained subservient to those who posed themselves as mighty will say: "We remained your followers: can you share some part of this torment of the Fire with us?" Those who posed themselves mighty will reply: "Now all of us are in it. God has delivered a verdict between His servants." And the dwellers of Hell will say to the keepers of Hell: "Request your Lord to relieve our torment for a single day!" They will reply: "Did not messengers come to you with clear signs?" They will reply: "Yes they definitely did come." Their keepers will say: "Make this request yourselves." But the call of the disbelievers will end up in vain. (47-50)

And indeed We help Our messengers and the true believers in the life of this world and will also help them on the Day when the witnesses rise to testify; the Day no excuse will avail those who were unjust to their souls and a curse shall be on them and for them will be an evil abode. (51-52)

And We showed Moses the way and entrusted the Israelites with the Book: as a guide and reminder for men of understanding. So, remain steadfast. Indeed, God's promise is bound to be fulfilled and keep seeking forgiveness for your sins and exalt your Lord while celebrating His praises evening and morning. (53-55)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۲۳﴾[20]

The word اٰيٰتِ (signs) refers to the directives which Moses (sws) brought over to the Pharaoh and his courtiers and the expression سُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ refers to the miraculous staff of

20. And We sent forth Moses with Our signs and with a clear proof.

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Moses (sws) which by its nature was a divine proof given to Moses (sws) so that Pharaoh and his courtiers do not remain in any doubt that he is an envoy of God. The word سُلْطٰنٍ is used in the Qur'ān at many places to connote "proof", "permission", "authority." Its explanation has been presented at an appropriate place in this exegesis. More explanation shall be found in Sūrah al-Raḥmān under the verse: لَا تَنْفُذُوْنَ اِلَّا بِسُلْطٰنٍ. (۳۳:۵۵).

اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَقَارُوْنَ فَقَالُوْا سٰحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴿۲۴﴾[21]

Here, besides the Pharaoh two of his other prominent leaders are mentioned who were very active adversaries of Moses (sws). Both of them have been mentioned in detail in previous *sūrahs*. Of the two, Qārūn was an Israelite; however, with the help of the Pharaoh's government had gathered a lot of wealth, and it was this wealth which became the greatest reason for his animosity for Moses (sws). This has been alluded to in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ. I have referred to there that there exists great similarity between his circumstances and those of Abū Lahab. Here the leaders of the Pharaoh are mentioned to assure the Prophet (sws): just as the leaders of the Quraysh are vehemently opposing him, in a similar manner, Moses (sws) was opposed by the Pharaoh and his chiefs; however, the Almighty routed and humiliated them; the leaders of the Quraysh too will meet a similar fate if they do not desist from their ways.

The words فَقَالُوْا سٰحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ refer to the fact that these people regarded the miracle worked by Moses (sws) to be an act of sorcery and regarded his claim of being sent forth by God as His Messenger to be absolutely false.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا اقْتُلُوْٓا اَبْنَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ وَاسْتَحْيُوْا نِسَآءَهُمْ ۭ وَمَا كَيْدُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ ﴿۲۵﴾[22]

The implication of this verse is that the obligation the Pharaoh and his leaders owed to the true message brought to them by Moses (sws) was to accept it and mend their ways; however, they ended up doing the totally opposite. Thinking that Moses (sws) wants to make the Israelites an organized and powerful nation, they gave orders to ruthlessly stick to the policy of killing their men and letting their women live in captivity. This policy had been initiated long before the birth of Moses (sws).

وَمَا كَيْدُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ: This policy of killing the males, as alluded to at an appropriate place, was meant to keep in control the quantity of the Israelites so that their vast number is not able to become a danger for the Copts. However, all measures adopted

21. To the Pharaoh, Hāmān, and Qarūn. But they said: "A sorcerer, a liar."

22. And when he brought them the truth from Ourself, they said: "Slay the sons of those who share his faith, and spare only their women." And the ploy of these disbelievers ended up in futility.

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to implement this policy ended up in vain. The Israelites continued to increase, as is indicated by references cited at an appropriate place of this exegesis. The stage reached when Moses (sws) came into the fore with his open challenge, and what the Pharaoh and his leaders feared became a reality.

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ذَرُوْنِيْٓ اَقْتُلْ مُوْسٰى وَلْيَدْعُ رَبَّهٗ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اَنْ يُّبَدِّلَ دِيْنَكُمْ اَوْ اَنْ يُّظْهِرَ فِي الْاَرْضِ الْفَسَادَ ﴿٢٦﴾[23]

The failure of the scheme and the demand of Moses (sws) made the Pharaoh and his leaders lose their senses. In this disturbed state of mind, the Pharaoh sought permission from his courtiers to slay Moses (sws) and if he has a Lord who has sent him forth as His messenger, then he should call Him for help. To support this suggestion of his, the Pharaoh argued that he feared that either Moses (sws) would change their religion or initiate rebellion in the land. It may be kept in mind that the Pharaoh was regarded by his people to be the manifestation of the sun God and his state was that of an incarnate king. For this reason, the call of Moses (sws) towards monotheism directly affected his divinity. If the Copts accepted this call, their religion would change and if they did not accept it and the Israelites became organized under the leadership of Moses (sws), the necessary consequence of this would have been rebellion in the country. Sensing these dangers, the Pharaoh sought permission from the leaders of his nation to slay Moses (sws). It is clearly evident from the word ذَرُوْنِيْٓ (let me) that Moses (sws) and his call had acquired such might that it was not possible for even a tyrant and dictator like Pharaoh to seize him without the help of his chiefs.

وَقَالَ مُوْسٰٓى اِنِّيْ عُذْتُ بِرَبِّيْ وَرَبِّكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٧﴾[24]

When Moses (sws) was informed of this intention of the Pharaoh, he consigned his matter to God by saying that he seeks refuge of his own Lord and that of the Pharaoh from the evil of every arrogant person who does not have faith in the Hereafter. The words "your Lord" are meant to remind and admonish the Pharaoh. He should remember that God is his Lord and no one else is the Lord that a person may rely on.

Arrogance is actually the name of showing indifference to the truth which is the result of egotism and self-centeredness and these in turn are the result of a lack of faith in the Hereafter. He who does not believe in the Hereafter is a tyrant. He can do anything in crossing the limits.

وَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ ۖ مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ اِيْمَانَهٗٓ اَتَقْتُلُوْنَ رَجُلًا اَنْ يَّقُوْلَ رَبِّيَ اللّٰهُ وَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۭ وَ

23. And the Pharaoh said: "Let me slay Moses, and then let him invoke his God! I fear that he might change your religion and spread rebellion in the land."

24. Moses said: "I take refuge with my Lord and your Lord from the evil of every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning."

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اِنۡ يَّكُ كَاذِبًا فَعَلَيۡهِ كَذِبُهٗ ۚ وَاِنۡ يَّكُ صَادِقًا يُّصِبۡكُمۡ بَعۡضُ الَّذِىۡ يَعِدُكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِىۡ مَنۡ هُوَ مُسۡرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴿۲۸﴾ [25]

From here begins the anecdote of a true believer. Though he belonged to the royal family of the Pharaoh yet he was a true lover of the truth and a God-fearing individual. For this reason, all his sympathies were with Moses (sws) ever since the beginning. He has already been mentioned in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ. When Moses (sws) accidentally killed a Copt and the leaders of the land started to consult one another to kill Moses (sws), it was he who informed Moses (sws) about this intention and suggested to him to leave Egypt. After this, Moses (sws) left for Madyan. It is evident from this incident that even before Moses (sws) was assigned prophethood, this true believer had great sympathies for the reformatory undertakings of Moses (sws).

When after returning from Madyan, Moses (sws) announced his prophethood, this true believer embraced faith; however, for a considerable period of time, he hid his faith. He perhaps felt that at that time the service he could do to Moses (sws) and his call while hiding his faith could not have been done had he declared it. He was a member of the royal family and had all the rights and privileges which such people have. It will become evident from the succeeding verses that he was a member of the Pharaoh's "House of Lords." If he had declared his faith at that time, the Pharaoh would have immediately made him a disgraced person before the whole nation by declaring him to be a national rebel.

However, in matters of religion and faith giving due consideration to some expediency is acceptable when this can be expected to be of some benefit to religion. If the matter crosses this limit and religion is faced with some decisive danger, then hiding faith at that time amounts to hypocrisy. Consequently, this true believer hid his faith as long as he thought there was some benefit for religion in it. However, when he saw that Moses' (sws) life was facing danger, he gave up this cautious behaviour and vehemently supported Moses (sws) before the Pharaoh and his courtiers and also openly declared his faith.

As referred to earlier, this incident has been narrated by the Qur'ān in this precarious phase of the prophet Muḥammad's preaching mission so that those who were hiding their faith because of some expediency or fear clearly come to know that now when their enemies are conniving with one another to kill Muḥammad (sws) it is not permissible for anyone to hide his faith; this is the time when like this true believer every person should come into the open and be prepared to endanger his own life for this.

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25. But a believer from the Pharaoh's kinsmen, who had hidden his faith, said: "Would you slay a man merely because he says: 'my Lord is God?' even though he has also brought to you very clear signs from your Lord. And if he is lying, then its evil consequences will afflict none but him. And if he is speaking the truth, a part at least of what he is threatening you with will smite you. God will not let him succeed who is a blatant liar and a transgressor.

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It may be kept in mind that the words اَتَقْتُلُوْنَ رَجُلًا اَنْ يَّقُوْلَ رَبِّيَ اللّٰهُ وَ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ("Would you slay a man merely because he says: 'my Lord is God?' even though he has also brought to you very clear signs from your Lord.") were uttered by this true believer while addressing the Pharaoh and his courtiers.

In this one sentence, he put forth many facts before the Pharaoh and his chiefs.

Firstly, to regard God as one's Lord is an indisputable fact; if someone says so, he is expressing the radiant truth on which he deserves to be congratulated and supported and not killed.

Secondly, the signs brought by Moses (sws) are a very clear proof of him being an envoy of God; only the blind can refuse to accept that he is God-sent.

Thirdly, the Lord whose messenger he is declaring himself to be is also their messenger; it is their ignorance that they are regarding others besides Him to be their Lord as well.

Through the words وَ اِنْ يَّكُ كَاذِبًا فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهٗ ۚ وَ اِنْ يَّكُ صَادِقًا يُّصِبْكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِيْ يَعِدُكُمْ the true believer has expressed the consequences of killing Moses (sws): if he was lying in his claim to prophethood, then he will face its evil results and if he was true in this claim (as was the actual case), then they should remember that a part of the punishment he is threatening them with is bound to visit them. This is a reference to the established practice of God regarding the rejecters of the messengers of God or those who plan to kill them. What the true believer meant to convey was that these people should not be blinded by their emotions so much that they are only able to see one aspect of the whole issue; they must also consider the other aspect which is very serious; since they regard him to be a liar, hence they think that killing him is very easy a task; how do they know that he is a liar; if he turns out to be a true person then this step will prove very dangerous for them; hence for their own peace and well-being they should leave him alone; they should not lead themselves to destruction by taking this step.

The words وَ اِنْ يَّكُ كَاذِبًا uttered by him are with respect to the opinion of his addressees. It is evident from this usage that a doubt expressed in a conditional sentence is not always explicit in connoting doubt; it only gives the impression of doubt. The real meaning is ascertained through context and occasion. It is essential to give due regard to this linguistic style; it will help in understanding some other verses.

Consider next the words: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِيْ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ. I have already discussed the various meanings of يَهْدِيْ at an appropriate place of this exegesis. Here it is used to connote making a person succeed in his efforts. This is a very subtle sentence. Apparently, it expresses a principle imbibed with wisdom that a person who transgresses bounds and is a liar will not be allowed by the Almighty to succeed; however, deliberation will show that it contains a very subtle slant of sarcasm for the Pharaoh which the true believer uttered right in his face before all his courtiers.

يٰقَوْمِ لَكُمُ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ظٰهِرِيْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۡ فَمَنْ يَّنْصُرُنَا مِنْۢ بَاْسِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ جَآءَنَا ؕ قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ مَآ اُرِيْكُمْ اِلَّا مَآ اَرٰى وَ مَآ

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اَهْدِيْكُمْ اِلَّا سَبِيْلَ الرَّشَادِ ﴿۲۹﴾[26]

The speech of the true believer is gradually becomes evident. While addressing the chiefs of his nation he says: Today you are politically sovereign in the land; you can do whatever you want to; no one can stop you; however, you should seriously contemplate the question that if as a result of this God's punishment waylays us, then who will save us from His grasp.

This speech of the true believer was being delivered in the packed court of the Pharaoh before him; for this reason, the Pharaoh interrupted it at this point: قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ مَآ اُرِيْكُمْ اِلَّا مَآ اَرٰى وَمَآ اَهْدِيْكُمْ اِلَّا سَبِيْلَ الرَّشَادِ. He said that his suggestion of killing Moses (sws) was his considered opinion and that he was guiding them to the right policy in this regard. What he meant was that no one should think that he had given this suggestion in haste while being overcome with emotions; he had done so after fully contemplating the consequences and that this was the right course of action in this regard; if this course is not adopted immediately, then it could prove disastrous for the country.

The word ظٰهِرِيْنَ is an accusative of state from the genitive pronoun in لَكُمُ. Many examples of such accusatives of state from genitive pronouns can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

It is evident from this intervention of the Pharaoh that he had assessed that if the speech of the true believer continues uninterrupted many courtiers would be influenced by it. So like a clever political leader, he tried to over-awe the audience by his sincere intentions, acumen and far-sightedness.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَ يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّثْلَ يَوْمِ الْاَحْزَابِ ﴿۳۰﴾ مِثْلَ دَاْبِ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ۭ وَمَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعِبَادِ ﴿۳۱﴾[27]

The true believer continued with his speech without giving any importance to the Pharaoh's intervention. He said: "O People of My Nation! I want to inform you that if any harm comes to Moses (sws) then the same punishment will come upon you as came to the nations of Noah (sws), 'Ād, Thamūd and others after them. These nations tried to harm their respective messengers; as a result they were destroyed. You will also be destroyed if you follow in their footsteps."

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26. O People of My Nation! Today sovereignty is with you and you are dominant in the land; but who will save us from the torment of God if it visits us?" The Pharaoh said: "I am informing you of my calculated opinion and am guiding you towards exactly the straight path."

27. And he who had embraced faith said: "O People of My Nation! I fear the same punishment will befall you as what befell the factions; for example, the punishment which befell the people of Noah, the 'Ād, and the Thamūd, and those who came after them. And God does not seek to wrong His servants in any way."

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The words وَمَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعِبَادِ uttered by him imply: it should remain in mind that God is very merciful to His servants; so before sending any punishment, He has sent a messenger to inform them so that those who want to repent and mend their ways can do so. If instead of giving due value to this favour of God any attempt is made to kill His messenger, then this would mean that God has conclusively communicated the truth to them and they alone have taken themselves to destruction.

It is evident that the Pharaoh existed after the 'Ād and the Thamūd, and these nations thrived nearby. Their details were so well-known that they could be presented before people of the Pharaoh's time to remind and admonish them.

وَيٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ ﴿٣٢﴾ يَوْمَ تُوَلُّوْنَ مُدْبِرِيْنَ ۚ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿٣٣﴾[28]

The word يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ means "a day of shouts and cries." It is used to delineate the punishment of the Day of Judgement with which people are being warned of. When a great calamity takes place, cries of "run", "flee," and "get hold of this" etc are heard here and there; thus this word is very apt to connote the punishment of that Day. It is also meant to remind people that today since they are given respite by the Almighty, they are making plans to attack God and His messenger; however, when God will attack them, they will turn and run away but this running away will be of no use because no one will be able to save them from God's grasp. The words يَوْمَ تُوَلُّوْنَ مُدْبِرِيْنَ ۚ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ point to this aspect.

The words وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ of the true believer's speech are meant to convey to his addressees that his task is to only inform them of the good and evil; accepting this advice is up to them; if they continue with what they have planned, then in his opinion those whom the Almighty leads astray cannot be guided by anyone. These words allude to the established practice of the Almighty regarding providing people with guidance or leading them astray. It has been discussed in this exegesis at various places.

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ يُوْسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّا جَآءَكُمْ بِهٖ ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَّبْعَثَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ رَسُوْلًا ۭ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُّرْتَابُۨ ﴿٣٤﴾[29]

In this verse, the true believer has referred to the history of his nation's deviation from the right path: earlier Joseph (sws) too had come to them with very clear arguments but they continuously remained in doubt regarding his teachings. What is

28. "– O People of My Nation! I fear for you the Day of cries and shouts. The day you will turn and flee and there will be none to save you from God. And he whom God leads astray shall have none to guide him."

29. "And before this, Joseph came to you with clear teachings, but you only kept doubting what he brought until when he died you thought that after him God will never send another messenger." In this manner does God lead astray those who exceed bounds and are afflicted with doubts.

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implied is that because of the deep reverence which the king of those times had for Joseph (sws), they did not adopt a hostile attitude towards him; however, they did not value much the teachings and guidance they had been given; in fact, since they found these teachings to be against their desires they showed indifference to them and also remained deep in doubts about them.

The words حَتّٰٓى اِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَّبْعَثَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ رَسُوْلًا depict the fact that instead of regarding Joseph (sws) to be a manifestation of God's mercy they regarded him to be a burden. So much so, when he died they breathed a sigh of relief and became contented that God will not send any more messenger who like Joseph (sws) will try to check their desires.

The words كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُّرْتَابُ ۨ are meant to convey the fact that the current state of deviation from the truth of the Pharaoh and his people are the result of this previous state of deviation from the truth. Those who break the limits of God and in their frenzy to follow their base desires instead of adopting the path of knowledge and conviction tread the path riddled with doubts are pushed by God to wander on this path; they never receive guidance after that.

At many places in this exegesis, I have referred to the principle according to which the Almighty deals with His servants: He wants people to duly value the cognizance of good and evil and the blessing of intellect and understanding He has bestowed on them. Those who value these favours are further guided and led by the Almighty. Those who do not value them and while being overwhelmed with their base desires try to cast doubts on the most evident of truths and spend all their intelligence for this purpose, their innate guidance which is found in the nature of every human being is confiscated by the Almighty in retribution of this attitude. They are never guided by Him. By these words, the true believer has actually pointed to this reality, and this fact should be of special attention to people in these times who are trying to blur and obscure very evident facts.

الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطٰنٍ اَتٰىهُمْ ؕ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ قَلْبِ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ ﴿۳۵﴾[30]

These words imply that whatever discussion should be conducted on the signs of God and His directives should be conducted on the basis of reasoning and proof. Those who oppose them without any reasoning or proof are regarded as detestable by the Almighty and the believers.

One of the points that is evident from the words كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ قَلْبِ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ is that

30. Those who dispute God's revelations without any argument that has reached them are deeply hated by God and by the believers. In this manner does God seal the heart of every arrogant tyrant.

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those who indulge in needless hairsplitting do so because the Almighty has set a seal on their hearts because of which they lose direction and are not ready to accept anything which is against their desires however much evident it may be.

The second point that is evident from these words is that this seal is set on their hearts because of their arrogance and haughtiness. Because of their conceit they oppose everything which is against their desires. Even if a prophet or a messenger tries to make them understand something they are not prepared to hear him because they question his status and reckon that they were more worthy of being given propethood. In these times, many people having delusions of grandeur make fun of very clear teachings of Islam.

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يٰهَامٰنُ ابْنِ لِيْ صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اَبْلُغُ الْاَسْبَابَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اَسْبَابَ السَّمٰوٰتِ فَاَطَّلِعَ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِ مُوْسٰى وَاِنِّيْ لَاَظُنُّهٗ كَاذِبًا ۭ وَكَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِفِرْعَوْنَ سُوْۗءُ عَمَلِهٖ وَصُدَّ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۭ وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ تَبَابٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَ يٰقَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوْنِ اَهْدِكُمْ سَبِيْلَ الرَّشَادِ ﴿٣٨﴾ يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّمَا هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ ۡ وَّاِنَّ الْاٰخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ ﴿٣٩﴾[31]

The true believer did challenge the Pharaoh but like worldly leaders did not try to over-awe him with the number of his followers and associates. On the contrary, in consonance with the way of the prophets of God, he reminded him of the Hereafter by telling him that the life of this world and its pleasures are but transient. The real abode of people is the Hereafter; so they should not ruin their eternal life to benefit from these fleeting pleasures.

مَنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً فَلَا يُجْزٰٓى اِلَّا مِثْلَهَا ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ يُرْزَقُوْنَ فِيْهَا بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٤٠﴾[32]

This verse portrays the principle on the basis of which reward and punishment will be take place in the Hereafter. Those who reach there with the provision of vice will be punished commensurately so that no excess is committed against them; however, those who reach there with the provision of virtue will be admitted to Paradise and there they will receive innumerable favours and provisions. Here it may be kept in mind that this

31. The Pharaoh said: "O Hāmān! Build me a tower that I may reach the borders – the borders of the heavens that I may peep upon the Lord of Moses; I regard him to be a complete liar." And in this manner, the misdeeds of the Pharaoh were endeared to him and he was stopped from the straight path. And the ploy of the Pharaoh ended up in failure. And he who had embraced faith said: "My people! Follow me; I am guiding you to the right path. My people! The life of this world is but a fleeting pleasure; the real abode is the life to come.

32. "He who commits an evil shall receive in exchange what is similar to it and he who does a good deed, whether man or woman, and is also a true believer, then it is such people who will enter Paradise where they receive innumerable blessings."

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address of the true believer is to the leaders of the aristocracy most of whom must have wanted these transient pleasures of life and it was to gain them that they must have continued to be his yes-men. He directed their attention to not ruin their eternal life for this temporary life.

وَيٰقَوْمِ مَا لِيْٓ اَدْعُوْكُمْ اِلَى النَّجٰوةِ وَتَدْعُوْنَنِيْٓ اِلَى النَّارِ ﴿٤١﴾ تَدْعُوْنَنِيْ لِاَكْفُرَ بِاللّٰهِ وَاُشْرِكَ بِهٖ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۡ وَّاَنَا اَدْعُوْكُمْ اِلَى الْعَزِيْزِ الْغَفَّارِ ﴿٤٢﴾[33]

It is evident from contextual indications that just as the Pharaoh interfered in the speech of this true believer, similarly the leaders of his nation also posed some objections on his speech. As our readers may have noticed, this true believer did not take any notice of the interventions of the Pharaoh because nothing good was expected from him. However, he did reply to the objections of these leaders and did so in a very touching and sympathetic way. Obviously, these leaders must have objected that the whole speech of this believer was against their idols which were continued to be worshipped by their forefathers and that he was creating a new religion separate from that of their forefathers. At this, the true believer very movingly answered them that it is very strange that he is calling them towards salvation while they are calling him towards Hell; he is calling them towards the merciful and mighty Lord – Who can both seize them and forgive them, while they are calling him to associate with God partners about whom he has no knowledge that they are His partners. The implication is that as far as the issue of a God is concerned Who readily accepts repentance and is merciful, then this is an established fact; even the polytheists believe in Him and there is no option but to accept Him. As for the fact that He has some associates and partners, then this needs proof and that he (ie the true believer) has no proof of it; if he makes someone God's partner without any proof, then how will he face God.

It becomes evident from the words لِاَكْفُرَ بِاللّٰهِ وَاُشْرِكَ بِهٖ that there is no difference between polytheism (*shirk*) and disbelief (*kufr*) with regard to their reality. A person who sets up partners with God in fact disbelieves in Him. This is because in religion it is not merely enough to believe in God; it is essential to believe in Him with all His attributes and rights and the greatest of these rights is to accept His oneness.

لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّمَا تَدْعُوْنَنِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ لَيْسَ لَهٗ دَعْوَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ وَاَنَّ مَرَدَّنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَاَنَّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ هُمْ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ﴿٤٣﴾[34]

The expression لَا جَرَمَ means لَا مُحَالَةَ، لَا بُدَّ (this is a fact; there can be no two opinions

33. "And my people! What is the matter; I call you towards salvation and you call me to the Fire? You bid me reject God and associate partners with Him of which I know nothing. And I call you to the Almighty, the Forgiving One."

34. "Indeed, the ones to whom you call me to neither have a say in this world nor in the next. And all of us have to return to God. And those who transgress bounds are the ones who shall be the inmates of Hell."

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about it; it cannot be doubted). This expression while evolving from this meaning also at times connotes an oath.

The negation لَا is the negation of its benefit; ie. calling them will be of no use neither in this world nor the next. This fact is alluded to at other places of the Qur'ān as well.

After presenting the argument depicted in the previous verse, the true believer in this verse has summed up the whole discussion before the audience. He has said that it is certain that the idols whose worship they are calling him to are the products of their fancy. Beseeching or invoking them is of no use in this world or in the next; whatever they obtain in this world is from God and in the next world too all of them shall return to God. No one from among these alleged deities will be their protector or helper.

The word مُسْرِفِيْنَ in the expression وَ اَنَّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ هُمْ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ refers to those who have committed polytheism and thereby wronged their souls. The implication is that this is also an indubitable fact that those would wrong their souls will have no intercessor; in fact, all such people will end up in Hell.

فَسَتَذْكُرُوْنَ مَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ ؕ وَ اُفَوِّضُ اَمْرِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿۴۴﴾[35]

This is the last and most sympathetic and compassionate sentence of the speech of the true believer. His final words are: whether today you people accept what I say or not, you will definitely remember my advice in the coming phases, but at that time this will be of no avail. This is a reference not only to the reward and punishment of the Hereafter but also to the punishment that will visit them if they denied their messenger which he earlier on had warned them of. It is obvious that when both these types of punishments will befall them, they will recall this speech of his and express regret; but this will be of no use at that time.

The words وَ اُفَوِّضُ اَمْرِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ of the true believer imply that whatever he wanted to say he has said and now his addressees can do what they like. If they become his enemies because of this truth that he has spoken, then he has consigned his matter to God. He is the protector of His people and watches over them (اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ).

فَوَقٰىهُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِ مَا مَكَرُوْا وَ حَاقَ بِاٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوْٓءُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿۴۵﴾[36]

It is evident from this verse that after this speech of the true believer, the Pharaoh and his chiefs turned into his foes and began conspiring against him in various ways in order to bring him back into their religion; however, the Almighty protected him from

35. "So, soon you will recall the things I am telling you, and I consign my matter to God. Indeed, He is watching over His servants."

36. Thus God delivered him from the evil consequences of their ploys and My punishment surrounded the Pharaoh's people.

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their conspiracies. It is evident from this beyond any shadow of doubt that the Pharaoh and his courtiers never succeeded in conspiring against him to force him to give up the true faith. It is also similarly evident that the Almighty protects all His servants who declare the truth.

The word آل obviously refers to his family as well as followers. The verse says that the Almighty protected the true believer from the evil designs of the Pharaoh and his companions; however, the latter were surrounded by "an evil punishment." This refers to the decisive punishment which caused the Pharaoh and all his armies to drown in the sea. This punishment is called "an evil punishment" because during the time Moses (sws) preached the people of Egypt, many punishments visited them but all of them were meant to warn and remind them and both the believers and the disbelievers were tested through them. However, while the believers were protected from this final punishment, the Pharaoh and his race were totally routed. It is evident from the word حَاقَ that this punishment surrounded them in such a manner that they were not able to escape from it in any way.

اَلنَّارُ يُعۡرَضُوۡنَ عَلَيۡهَا غُدُوًّا وَّعَشِيًّا ۚ وَيَوۡمَ تَقُوۡمُ السَّاعَةُ ۟ اَدۡخِلُوۡۤا اٰلَ فِرۡعَوۡنَ اَشَدَّ الۡعَذَابِ ﴿۴۶﴾[37]

This verse furnishes details of the punishment mentioned in the previous verse: in the life of Barzakh they are made to observe Hell every now and then so that they continue to keep in mind their real abode and when the Day of Judgement comes it will be directed that the Pharaoh and all his followers be cast into the grievous punishment of Hell. It is mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān that after death pious and wicked souls will find themselves in Barzakh in an atmosphere that is in accordance with their deeds. This is like a prelude to them for Paradise or Hell. When the Day of Judgement comes, reward and punishment will appear in their actual forms before people. The grave punishment which is mentioned in Ḥadīth narratives relates to this world of Barzakh.

وَاِذۡ يَتَحَآجُّوۡنَ فِى النَّارِ فَيَقُوۡلُ الضُّعَفٰٓؤُا لِلَّذِيۡنَ اسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡۤا اِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمۡ تَبَعًا فَهَلۡ اَنۡتُمۡ مُّغۡنُوۡنَ عَنَّا نَصِيۡبًا مِّنَ النَّارِ ﴿۴۷﴾ قَالَ الَّذِيۡنَ اسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡۤا اِنَّا كُلٌّ فِيۡهَاۤ ۙ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدۡ حَكَمَ بَيۡنَ الۡعِبَادِ ﴿۴۸﴾[38]

I have indicated earlier that the anecdote of this true believer has been recounted also to encourage people who were hesitant of expressing their faith because of being over-

37. Before the Fire they are brought morning and evening, and on the day the Hereafter arrives, it will be ordered: "Admit the Pharaoh's people into a horrific torment!"

38. And when they will argue with one another in Hell, those who remained subservient to those who posed themselves as mighty will say: "We remained your followers: can you share some part of this torment of the Fire with us?" Those who posed themselves mighty will reply: "Now all of us are in it. God has delivered a verdict between His servants."

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awed by their leaders. It is now depicted in these verses that in the gatherings of this world people who do not have the courage to acknowledge and proclaim the truth for fear of their leaders will one day find themselves and their leaders in Hell mutually cursing one another. The weak and the oppressed will tell their leaders that they had blindly followed them in the previous world; so will they now even partly share with them the torment of Hell. The leaders will reply that the time for expressing objections and grievances has expired; now both of them have to remain in this torment; the Almighty has decided very justly between His people. The implication is that this excuse will be of no use to a person that he was under pressure from others and hence remained a follower of evil. Each person is responsible for his own self; he cannot put this responsibility on others and absolve himself. Hence a person however much under pressure he may be should declare the truth while reposing his trust in God and should rest assured that the Almighty will protect him and even if he has to face death in His cause, this death will be considered as martyrdom.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that the Qur'ān has used the word اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا for these leaders who were an embodiment of disbelief and disobedience. The word means: "people who thought themselves to be of high status or who were inebriated with their high status." This word is the most appropriate term for such defiant leaders. Greatness in this world is for God alone and hence every leadership which takes people away from the path of God is arrogance personified and its ultimate fate is Hell – not only for the leaders but also for their followers.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ فِي النَّارِ لِخَزَنَةِ جَهَنَّمَ ادْعُوْا رَبَّكُمْ يُخَفِّفْ عَنَّا يَوْمًا مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَوَلَمْ تَكُ تَاْتِيْكُمْ رُسُلُكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۭ قَالُوْا بَلٰى ۭ قَالُوْا فَادْعُوْا ۚ وَمَا دُعٰٓؤُا الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ ﴿٥٠﴾[39]

When the companions of Hell will see that neither their deities and intercessors have been of any avail to them nor these leaders could help them in this state of utter hopelessness, they will beseech the guards of Hell to request God to lessen the punishment just for one day so that they can have some reprieve. These guards will in return ask them whether messengers of God had not come to them with clear signs. At this, the dwellers of Hell will reply in the affirmative. Hearing this reply, the guards will tell them to make this request directly to God; they cannot make this request on behalf of such worthless people.

The words وَمَا دُعٰٓؤُا الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ depict the fact that all the requests and cries of the disbelievers will end up in vain. Neither will their deities hear these calls nor will

39. And the dwellers of Hell will say to the keepers of Hell: "Request your Lord to relieve our torment for a single day!" They will reply: "Did not messengers come to you with clear signs?" They will reply: "Yes they definitely did come." Their keepers will say: "Make this request yourselves." But the call of the disbelievers will end up in vain.

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these leaders prove to be of any help to them nor will God listen to them. All doors of hope shall stand closed on them.

اِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْاَشْهَادُ ﴿٥١﴾[40]

This verse relates to verse 45. The in between verses digressed to describe the punishment of Hell which the Pharaoh and his associates will have to face. The Almighty says in this verse that just as He helped Moses (sws) and the true believer, in a similar manner He not only helps in this world His messengers and those who profess faith in them but also on the Day when witnesses will stand up to bear evidence.

Our exegetes were afflicted with much confusion in interpreting this verse. The reason is that in it God very explicitly promises that He will also help in this very world the messengers and those who profess faith in them. The reason for this is that they are not fully aware of the difference between a *nabī* (prophet) and a *rasūl* (messenger). I have continued to point out at various places in this exegesis that it should be kept in mind. The practice of God regard the *rasūls* is that they set up a divine court of justice for people in this very world on behalf of the God. If their people deny them, these people are necessarily destroyed whether through some natural calamity or through the sword of the believers and regardless of this destruction taking place in the lifetime of a *rasūl* or after he departs from this world. The life of every *rasūl* from Noah (sws) to Jesus (sws) bears witness to this established practice of God and I have continued to explain it.

The expression وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْاَشْهَادُ obviously refers to the Day of Judgement because on that Day the Almighty will ask each prophet and messenger to bear witness to what they taught their people; similarly all the *ummahs* will be questioned regarding the response they gave to their respective messenger. The angels of God will also appear with the record of the deeds of people. These details have already been mentioned in Sūrah al-Mā'idah as well as some previous *sūrahs*.

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ مَعْذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ ﴿٥٢﴾[41]

This verse explains the words وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْاَشْهَادُ of the previous verse: such will be the clarity and certainty of the evidence borne by witnesses produced in the divine court on that Day that no excuse of people who have wronged their souls would be of any benefit to them. So much so, the excuse of people who would regard their leaders to be responsible for leading them astray would not be accepted. Their leaders will

40. And indeed We help Our messengers and the true believers in the life of this world and will also help them on the Day when the witnesses rise to testify.

41. The Day no excuse will avail those who were unjust to their souls and a curse shall be on them and for them will be an evil abode.

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vehemently negate them and say that their followers deserve this fate because they full well knew that their leaders had gone astray; these leaders will tell them that both of them are equal and both will have to endure a stern punishment of their deeds.

The words وَلَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ depict the fact that their excuse will be greeted with curse from God and his angels and in retribution of their deeds they will end up in an evil abode.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْهُدٰى وَاَوْرَثْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْكِتٰبَ ﴿٥٣﴾ هُدًى وَّذِكْرٰى لِاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿٥٤﴾[42]

These verses explain the help which is mentioned earlier viz. the Pharaoh and his followers and associates were afflicted with divine punishment while Moses (sws) and the Israelites who professed belief in him were bestowed with guidance and the Book of God.

The Book of God is a compendium of laws for the promise of supremacy and sovereignty in this world found in the promise concealed in the words وَاَوْرَثْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْكِتٰبَ. An essential requisite of this is that whichever people this Book is given, they achieve supremacy and sovereignty. Thus the Israelites were supreme as long as they adhered to this Book.

The words هُدًى وَّذِكْرٰى لِاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ state the objective of the Book: it is given to people so that it guide them towards God and remind people of His directives. However, only those people who have vision and intellect will benefit from it. Nothing can be of benefit to those who are deprived of vision and intellect. These words are a sarcastic remark on those among the Israelites who because of their foolishness and inclination towards going astray from the truth deprived themselves of the light of this Book.

فَاصْبِرْ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْۢبِكَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْاِبْكَارِ ﴿٥٥﴾[43]

This is a summary of the whole discussion and is meant to assure the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). He is asked to adhere to his preaching; God's promise is certain to materialize. The reference is to the promise mentioned in verse 51 one earlier: the Almighty will grant success to His messengers and their followers both in this world and in the Hereafter.

The words وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْۢبِكَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْاِبْكَارِ describe the methodology to acquire the patience which is an essential condition for this promise to materialize. The Prophet (sws) is asked to continuously seek forgiveness from the Almighty for any

42. And We showed Moses the way and entrusted the Israelites with the Book: as a guide and reminder for men of understanding.

43. So remain steadfast. Indeed, God's promise is bound to be fulfilled and keep seeking forgiveness for your sins and exalt your Lord while celebrating His praises evening and morning.

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blemishes and to exalt Him and celebrate His praises. I have already explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis that the way to acquire patience is to offer the prayer and to seek forgiveness. I have also pointed out that such addresses are not directed at the person of the Prophet (sws); he is addressed in the capacity of his people's representative. People who are not aware of such addresses and the subtlety found in them feel very repulsive to see the ascription of sin to the Prophet (sws) in this verse. The fact is that such an address has a specific occasion, as just explained.

Section III: Verses (56-85)

Coming up are the closing verses of this *sūrah*. These verses besides urging the Prophet (sws) to show patience and perseverance also give him glad tidings of help and victory in very clear words and in equally clear words sound a threat to the Quraysh of the punishment they will face in this world and in that to come. Interspersed between these glad tidings and threat are found arguments to substantiate monotheism and the Hereafter on which these glad tidings and this threat are based. These arguments are derived from morality, from the world within man and from the one outside him.

Readers may now proceed to recite these verses.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطٰنٍ اَتٰىهُمْ ۙ اِنْ فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ اِلَّا كِبْرٌ مَّا هُمْ بِبَالِغِيْهِ ۚ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ
السَّمِيْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَخَلْقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَمَا يَسْتَوِي
الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَلَا الْمُسِيْۗءُ ۭ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ اِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَاٰتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ
فِيْهَا وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُوْنِيْٓ اَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِيْ
سَيَدْخُلُوْنَ جَهَنَّمَ دٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى
النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۡ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ كَذٰلِكَ
يُؤْفَكُ الَّذِيْنَ كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَّالسَّمَاۗءَ بِنَاۗءً وَّصَوَّرَكُمْ فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ
وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ۭ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ هُوَ الْحَيُّ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ فَادْعُوْهُ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ
الدِّيْنَ ۭ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قُلْ اِنِّىْ نُهِيْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَمَّا جَاۗءَنِيَ الْبَيِّنٰتُ مِنْ رَّبِّيْ ۡ
وَاُمِرْتُ اَنْ اُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ
لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَشُدَّكُمْ ثُمَّ لِتَكُوْنُوْا شُيُوْخًا ۚ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّتَوَفّٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَجَلًا مُّسَمًّى وَّلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ

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يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۚ فَاِذَا قَضٰٓى اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٦٨﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَنّٰى يُصْرَفُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾
الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْكِتٰبِ وَبِمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا بِهٖ رُسُلَنَا ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ اِذِ الْاَغْلٰلُ فِيْٓ اَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَالسَّلٰسِلُ ؕ يُسْحَبُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾
فِي الْحَمِيْمِ ۙ ثُمَّ فِي النَّارِ يُسْجَرُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ ثُمَّ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالُوْا ضَلُّوْا عَنَّا بَلْ لَّمْ
نَكُنْ نَّدْعُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ ذٰلِكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْرَحُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَمْرَحُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ اُدْخُلُوْٓا اَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَاصْبِرْ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ ۚ فَاِمَّا
نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَصَصْنَا
عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَّمْ نَقْصُصْ عَلَيْكَ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُوْلٍ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِاٰيَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قُضِيَ بِالْحَقِّ وَ
خَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامَ لِتَرْكَبُوْا مِنْهَا وَمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ وَ
لِتَبْلُغُوْا عَلَيْهَا حَاجَةً فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَيُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ ۖ فَاَيَّ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ تُنْكِرُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾
اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَانُوْٓا اَكْثَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَاَشَدَّ قُوَّةً وَّاٰثَارًا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَمَآ
اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَرِحُوْا بِمَا عِنْدَهُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ
يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَوْا بَاْسَنَا قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَحْدَهٗ وَكَفَرْنَا بِمَا كُنَّا بِهٖ مُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ فَلَمْ يَكُ يَنْفَعُهُمْ اِيْمَانُهُمْ
لَمَّا رَاَوْا بَاْسَنَا ؕ سُنَّتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ قَدْ خَلَتْ فِيْ عِبَادِهٖ ۚ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾

As for those who indulge in baseless arguments about the signs of God without any reasoning that has come to them, arrogance is entrenched in their hearts in which they will never succeed. So, seek refuge with God; it is He Who really sees and hears. (56)

Creating the heavens and the earth is more difficult than creating people; yet most people know not. The blind and those who can see are not equal, nor are the evil-doers the equals of those who have professed faith and did righteous deeds. Seldom do you people take thought. Indeed, the Hour is sure to come; in this, there is no doubt; yet most are not embracing faith. And your Lord has said: "Call on me and I will accept your request. Those Who arrogantly evade worshipping Me shall enter Hell with all humiliation." (57-60)

It was God who made the night dark for you so that you take rest in it and lit up the day that you may work in it. God is bountiful to men, yet most people are not grateful. Indeed, God alone is your Lord, the Creator of all things. There is no god but Him. So how do you show foolishness? Similar foolishness was shown by those have been denying God's revelations. (61-63)

It is God who has made the earth a dwelling-place for you, and the sky a roof and moulded your bodies and did so in a befitting manner and provided you with wholesome things. Such is God, your Lord. Thus very blessed is God, Lord of the Universe. He is the Living One; there is no god but Him so invoke Him only with His

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pure obedience. Gratitude is for Him, Lord of the Universe! (64-65)

Say: "I have been forbidden to worship which you invoke besides God now that clear signs have come to me from my Lord. And I have been asked to submit myself." It is He Who created you from clay, then from a little germ, then from a clot of blood. He then brings you into this world as infants; He then nourishes you so that you may reach your adolescence. Then He gives you time to reach old age. And some of you die before this and to some He gives times to complete an appointed term. And this is because you may understand. It is He Who gives life and Who gives death. So, when He decrees a thing, He need only say: "Be," and it is. (66-68)

Do you not see those who indulge in baseless arguments about the revelations of God? Where are they turned away? Those who have denied the Book of God and those things as well which We sent with Our Messengers. They shall soon know when there will be yokes around their necks and shackles [around their feet]; they shall be dragged through boiling water; then cast into the fire of Hell. Then they will be asked: "Where are those whom you associated with God?" They will reply: "They have forsaken us; in fact, we have never been worshipping anything." In this way, God will make the disbelievers lose their senses. This is because without any basis you showed pride and conceit in the land. Enter the gates of Hell to stay therein forever. What an evil abode it is for the arrogant. (69-76)

Therefore, show perseverance. Indeed, the promise of God is bound to come true. Either We will show you a glimpse of the punishment We are threatening them with or give death to you. Thus to Us shall they return. (77)

And We sent forth other messengers before you; We have already related the accounts of some to you and there are some others whose accounts We have not related to you. And none of these messengers had the power to show a sign except by God's permission. Thus when God's decree arrives, justice shall prevail and at that time the evil-doers will be among the losers. (78)

It is God who has created beasts for you so that you can use some to ride on and some others are used as food for you and they have other benefits for you as well and has also created them so that they may fulfil some of your heart's desires; and on them and on ships you are boarded. (79-80)

And He shows you other innumerable signs. So, which of God's signs will you deny? Have they not journeyed through the land to see the fate of those before them? They were more numerous than them in the land with regard to their splendour more powerful than them; yet all their feats were of no use to them. (81-82)

So, when their messengers came to them with very clear signs, they proudly boasted of their own knowledge. And the punishment which they made fun of surrounded them. So, when they beheld Our punishment, they said: "We now believe in the one God and reject those which We served besides Him." But their faith was of no avail to them when they saw Our punishment. Such is the established practice of God which manifested itself among His servants earlier on as well and at that time the

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disbelievers end up as losers. (83-85)

Explanation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطٰنٍ اَتٰىهُمْ ۙ اِنْ فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ اِلَّا كِبْرٌ مَّا هُمْ بِبَالِغِيْهِ ۚ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ ﴿۵۶﴾[44]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that he should not worry about those who are baselessly arguing with him about the signs of God. The word "signs" refer to the arguments mentioned earlier which substantiate monotheism and the Hereafter in various styles. The verse cautions him that the reason for their opposition is not that the truth is not evident to them or that they have some reasoning against it; the fact is that they are opposing him because if they accept what he says then this would be acknowledging his superiority over them. This of course would severely dent the conceit and vanity they have for their leadership.

The words مَّا هُمْ بِبَالِغِيْهِ refer to the fact that this arrogance will not lead them to success. It is now the verdict of God that He will make the truth dominant through the Prophet (sws) and these opponents of his will be humiliated both in this world and in that to come.

The words فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ point to the fact that because of their arrogance, these people will try to harm him; but he should not worry and seek refuge with his God; he should rest assured that it is God who really watches and hears and He will protect him from the evil of these arrogant people.

لَخَلْقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾[45]

The verse says that if these people are led away by the misconception that after people die and become dust it is impossible to be created again, then this is their ignorance. How can it be difficult for the God Who can bring the heavens and the earth into existence to create mankind again? Was creating the first of these more difficult or the second? If God can create such huge structures, how can it be difficult for Him to accomplish this task which is much lesser in extent? This is an obvious fact that everyone must understand, yet as the verse says: وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ie. most people do not understand even such an obvious reality.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَلَا الْمُسِيْۗءُ ۭ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾ اِنَّ السَّاعَةَ

44. As for those who indulge in baseless arguments about the signs of God without any reasoning that has come to them, arrogance is entrenched in their hearts in which they will never succeed. So, seek refuge with God; it is He Who really sees and hears.

45. Creating the heavens and the earth is more difficult than creating people; yet most people know not.

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لَاٰتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾[46]

These verses explain the ethical requirement for the Hereafter to take place. It is said that if there is no Hereafter as these people have assumed, then this would mean that this world is a place that will be left unaccountable: those who are devoid of vision and intellect and those have it are equal and that there is no difference between the pious and the wicked. This obviously is not true. It negates the attributes of justice, wisdom, mercy and power of the Almighty which in other words negates the Almighty Himself. For this reason, it is certain for the Hereafter to come; there is no doubt in this; however, it is strange that most people are not professing faith in this obvious reality.

The word اَعْمٰى here refers to blind in intellect and the word بَصِيْرٌ refers to people who not only can see but also have visionary insight and are ones who reflect on the signs of God.

It is evident from the words قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ that these facts are not so concealed that no one is able to understand them. On the other hand, what is the remedy for people who are not ready to use their ears and eyes.

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُوْنِيْٓ اَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِيْ سَيَدْخُلُوْنَ جَهَنَّمَ دٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾[47]

The word اِسْتِكْبَارٌ (arrogance) here encompasses the meaning of evasion.

After reminding people of the Hereafter, a reminder is now sounded about monotheism: The Prophet's Lord has declared that no means or intermediary is required to ask from Him. Whoever wants to ask should ask from Him; He accepts the petitions of people. The implication is that when the Almighty is not appointing any means or intermediary then what is the need of making others as intercessors and then cajoling them. This verse negates the notion of the idolaters that it is through their deities only that people can access God. It states that the Almighty has not deputed intermediaries between Himself and His servants; on the contrary, every person can directly access Him and implore and beseech Him and the Almighty accepts such prayers.

The words اَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ imply that the Almighty definitely accepts every right supplication. If He does not accept a supplication or defers it, then this means that there is some wisdom in this deference. People must feel content on this because there is some good in it. It is totally useless to go to someone other than God for requests because it is only He Who has the authority to accept or reject requests, and it is only

46. The blind and those who can see are not equal, nor are the evil-doers the equals of those who have professed faith and did righteous deeds. Seldom do you people take thought. Indeed, the Hour is sure to come; in this, there is no doubt; yet most are not embracing faith.

47. And your Lord has said: "Call on me and I will accept your request. Those Who arrogantly evade worshipping Me shall enter Hell with all humiliation."

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He Who knows the wisdom behind His actions. I have already explained the established practice of the Almighty regarding the acceptance of a supplication at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

The words اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِيْ سَيَدْخُلُوْنَ جَهَنَّمَ دٰخِرِيْنَ imply that in spite of this open declaration of God those who are showing indifference in worshipping Him merely because of arrogance should remember that soon they will enter Hell in a humiliating way because of this arrogance.

Earlier in verse 56 it has been stated that those who are opposing Muḥammad (sws) are not doing so because they have any argument or because they are in some doubt; on the contrary, they are not doing so because their haughty political ambitions will be dented. They think that if they accept what he asks them to, then they will become inferiors and he will be superior to them. It is while referring to these people that it is said that people who are evading the truth merely because of arrogance will humiliatingly enter Hell.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَ النَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۶۱﴾ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۫ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿۶۲﴾[48]

In these verses, the word مُظْلِمًا after الَّيْلَ and لِتَعْلَمُوا after مُبْصِرًا are suppressed because of contextual indications. I have explained the nature of such suppressions at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

In these verses, the Almighty has directed attention to those of His signs which simultaneously substantiate monotheism and the Hereafter. With respect to the providence found in them, they substantiate the Hereafter and with respect to the harmony found in them they substantiate monotheism. It is stated that it is God alone Who has made the night dark and moderate in temperature so that people can obtain comfort from it and He has lit up the day so that they can do their work in it. This is a great favour of God on people; however, most people are ungrateful to Him.

The implication is that even if all other signs are ignored and only the creation of night and day is reflected upon, these people will come to know that their Creator is very merciful. If He created the day to cater for their livelihood activities, He also created the night for them to provide them with peace and comfort. Now had He wanted only the day to exist continuously no one could have stopped Him or had He intended the night remain continuously even then no one would have had the power to benefit from the light of day. A natural consequence of this mercy should have been that people show gratitude to God but most people are not grateful.

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48. It was God who made the night dark for you so that you take rest in it and lit up the day that you may work in it. God is bountiful to men, yet most people are not grateful. Indeed, God alone is your Lord, the Creator of all things. There is no god but Him. So, how do you show foolishness?

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Another natural consequence of God's mercy and providence is that He bring about a Day in which He reward those who recognized the rights of the favours of God and remained grateful to Him and punish those who did benefit from God's favours but remained ungrateful to Him. If He does not do so, then this means that the grateful and the ungrateful are equal. This obviously is wrong and against His justice.

The harmony between the night and the day which is a means to nurture and nourish man shows that various elements of this universe which apparently seem opposite to one another have great correspondence and conformity with one another. This is evidence of the fact that an exalted and wise being will definitely use these opposing elements in a wise manner. His will prevails on all and He is the creator and master of everything. The words are: ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۖ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ.

كَذٰلِكَ يُؤْفَكُ الَّذِيْنَ كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾[49]

A warning is sound to the Quraysh in this verse: the way they have lost their senses and by rejecting the simple call of the Qur'ān have strayed from the right path, in a similar way nations which have preceded them rejected the signs of God and strayed from the right path. The implication is that the Quraysh too will meet the fate these nations met if they too follow their ways.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَّ السَّمَآءَ بِنَآءً وَّ صَوَّرَكُمْ فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ وَ رَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾[50]

The topics of monotheism and Hereafter discussed earlier are taken up afresh in a new style in this verse. It is God Who has made the earth a dwelling place and the sky a roof and in this manner built for them a house in which people live. Their correlation and mutual harmony is a clear evidence of the fact that both are in the control of God. If they had separate gods, it could be very much possible that this house which these people are living in would never have even come into existence, let alone its harmony. It is thus evident that it is God Who has made this house and it is He alone Whose rule prevails in both the heavens and the earth.

The words وَ صَوَّرَكُمْ فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ refer to the fact that after bringing into existence a decorated and embellished house God created man and created him in a form better than all other creations. The word إِحْسَانٌ means "to do something in a befitting manner." At another instance, this topic is discussed in the following words in the Qur'ān: لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ فِيْٓ اَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيْمٍ. (٤:٩٥) (We have created man in the finest of moulds, (95:4)). The best

49. Similar foolishness was shown by those have been denying God's revelations.

50. It is God who has made the earth a dwelling-place for you, and the sky a roof and moulded your bodies and did so in a befitting manner and provided you with wholesome things. Such is God, your Lord. Thus very blessed is God, Lord of the Universe.

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of moulds here obviously does not refer merely to man's appearance; it also refers to the most appropriate proportion of material and abilities and capabilities because of which man has become superior to all other creations of this world.

The words وَ رَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ refer to the fact that just as the Almighty brought into existence a beautifully embellished house for them, He also provided them with sustenance of pure things.

The words ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ imply that God is the Lord of people as well as of the universe and He is very blessed and munificent.

هُوَ الْحَيُّ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ فَادْعُوْهُ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ؕ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۶۵﴾[51]

It is the Almighty Who is truly living and bestows life. Others whom people worship besides Him are as specified at another instance: اَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ اَحْيَآءٍ. (۱۶:۲۱) ie the dead who are devoid of life. They neither hear nor are able to help anyone. It is fruitless whether they are called or not. So people should only call God and with full sincerity and obey Him because it is only God, Lord of the worlds, Who is worthy of showing gratitude to.

قُلْ اِنِّيْ نُهِيْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَمَّا جَآءَنِيَ الْبَيِّنٰتُ مِنْ رَّبِّيْ ۫ وَ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۶۶﴾[52]

These words are an answer from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) to those contentious people who were disputing with him in support of their deities. He is told to warn them that he has been stopped to worship the deities they worship besides God; however much they may force him, he will not worship them especially when there has come to them very clear signs in this regard. He has been directed to totally submit himself to God ie. Worship Him only and obey Him only. This declaration of acquittal has been made so that if his opponents in any way think that they can soften him up by pressurizing him, then they should have no hope in this.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَشُدَّكُمْ ثُمَّ لِتَكُوْنُوْا شُيُوْخًا ۚ وَ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّتَوَفّٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَجَلًا مُّسَمًّى وَّ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۶۷﴾[53]

Some parts of this verse are suppressed keeping in view the conventional style of

51. He is the Living One; there is no god but Him so invoke Him only with His pure obedience. Gratitude is for Him, Lord of the Universe!

52. Say: "I have been forbidden to worship which you invoke besides God now that clear signs have come to me from my Lord. And I have been asked to submit myself."

53. It is He Who created you from clay, then from a little germ, then from a clot of blood. He then brings you into this world as infants; He then nourishes you so that you may reach your adolescence. Then He gives you time to reach old age. And some of you die before this and to some He gives times to complete an appointed term. And this is because you may understand.

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Arabic. I have tried to reveal these expressions and at other instances of this exegesis, have also given parallels of such a style.

The verse implies that if man reflects on his creation and on the phases of his creation, then they are sufficient to point to God's power and wisdom as well as to belief in monotheism and hereafter. The verse says that the Almighty began man's creation with clay; the later generations were born through a drop of fluid. This drop initially assumes the shape of a clot and then gradually develops into a foetus and then the Almighty extracts it from the womb of the mother in the form of a living infant.

The words ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَشُدَّكُمْ ثُمَّ لِتَكُوْنُوْا شُيُوْخًا refer to the fact that after creating man, God nourishes him so that he reaches adolescence and then God gives him more time until old age. In other words, the subject of nourishing them and giving them time is suppressed before لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا (so that you reach) and لِتَكُوْنُوْا (so that you become).

The words وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّتَوَفّٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَجَلًا مُّسَمًّى imply that it is not always the case that each infant reaches adolescence. Many die in infancy and there are many who are given time but that too till a certain period. No one is given any indefinite lifespan. Here before the word لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا a sentence to this effect is suppressed: there are many among you who are given time.

The words وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ allude to the reason because of which the Almighty has made man pass through these ups and downs of life. Why did He not create man in his final form from the earth or send him down from the heavens? The verse says that He did this so that man reflects on all the phases of his creation and understands the marvels and majesties and the power and wisdom of their Lord and professes faith in them. I have referred to at another instance of this exegesis that the Almighty has created this world in such a way that it has become the best source of learning all the facts which are necessary for the well-being and salvation of man. Here too before لَعَلَّكُمْ words to the following effect are suppressed: God has created you in this manner so that you reflect on your creation and comprehend the power and wisdom of the Almighty.

How can it be said that it is difficult for God to re-create man or someone can stop him from doing so when He created man with such power and wisdom, Who has complete and unshared authority and control over the life and death, young and old age of a person and Who has prescribed a time period for the life of every living being. All this shows that He has no partner and that He shall one day necessarily gather people to take account from them and this task is not the least difficult for Him. In order to fully understand this subject, readers are advised to look up verse 11 of Sūrah al-Fāṭir.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۚ فَاِذَا قَضٰٓى اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٦٨﴾[54]

The verse refers to the fact that life and death are totally under God's control and

54. It is He Who gives life and Who gives death. So, when He decrees a thing, He need only say: "Be," and it is.

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such is the extent of His power that when He makes a decision to do something there is nothing which can stop His intention to materialize. He need only say: "Be," and it is done and is done in a manner He wants. The implication is that people should understand the matter of the Hereafter also on similar lines. When He decides to bring it about He will only utter a command and it will appear in the blink of an eye.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ يُجَادِلُوۡنَ فِىۡۤ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَنّٰى يُصۡرَفُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۶۹﴾[55]

The implication is that these facts are all very clear but these wretched people have lost their senses because they are indulging in frivolous talk to deny these obvious verses of God.

الَّذِيۡنَ كَذَّبُوۡا بِالۡكِتٰبِ وَبِمَاۤ اَرۡسَلۡنَا بِهٖ رُسُلَنَا ۟ فَسَوۡفَ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۷۰﴾[56]

The word الۡكِتٰبِ refers to the Qur'ān. These verses state their crime: they not only rejected the Qur'ān, they also rejected all the teachings with which the Almighty sent His prophets. All the prophets have basically taught the same message to people that the Qur'ān is calling them to; so rejecting the Qur'ān is like rejecting all the prophets. The words فَسَوۡفَ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ are a threat. If they dare reject the Qur'ān, they will soon see the fate of this rejection.

اِذِ الۡاَغۡلٰلُ فِىۡۤ اَعۡنَاقِهِمۡ وَالسَّلٰسِلُ ؕ يُسۡحَبُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۷۱﴾ فِى الۡحَمِيۡمِ ۙ ثُمَّ فِى النَّارِ يُسۡجَرُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۷۲﴾[57]

In my opinion the word فِىۡۤ اَرۡجُلِهِمۡ (in their feet) are suppressed after وَالسَّلٰسِلُ. I have translated the verse accordingly. The verse says that since they denied the verses of God because of arrogance, their necks shall be shackled and their feet shall be enchained. After that, they will be dragged into boiling water and then thrown into Hell. The expression سُجِرَتۡ means "the kiln was filled with fuel."

ثُمَّ قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ اَيۡنَ مَا كُنۡتُمۡ تُشۡرِكُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۷۳﴾ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالُوۡا ضَلُّوۡا عَنَّا بَلۡ لَّمۡ نَكُنۡ نَّدۡعُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ شَيۡـًٔا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ۚ﴿۷۴﴾[58]

After that, they will be asked: "Speak up! Where are the deities that you have set up with God who can save you from His grasp? If they exist, call them up so that they

55. Do you not see those who indulge in baseless arguments about the revelations of God? Where are they turned away?

56. Those who have denied the Book of God and those things as well which We sent with Our Messengers. They shall soon know

57. When there will be yokes around their necks and shackles [around their feet]; they shall be dragged through boiling water; then cast into the fire of Hell.

58. Then they will be asked: "Where are those whom you associated with God?" They will reply: "They have forsaken us; in fact, we have never been worshipping anything." In this way, God will make the disbelievers lose their senses.

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can save you from punishment." The expression مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ here refers to those who oppose God and it is used in this meaning. I have explained this at an appropriate place in this exegesis.

They reply will be that all these deities have been lost to them and that in fact they have not been worshipping anything earlier. In other words, at first they will acknowledge that they had some deities whom they worshipped but that none of them is here to help them; however, when they will realize that it is because of their worshipping these deities that they are facing this horrific fate, they will refute the existence of these deities expecting that this might somewhat be beneficial to them. It is evident from other instances of the Qur'ān that on the Day of Judgement the idolaters would be afflicted with such nervousness that in the same breath they will acclaim their deities as well as reject them. I have discussed this while explaining verses twenty three and twenty four of Sūrah al-An'ām.

The words كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ allude to this very simultaneous acknowledgement and denial: the punishment of the Almighty will make them so badly lose their wits that they will not even know what they have already said and what they are now saying. This has already been explained earlier and in verse 40 of the next *sūrah*: Sūrah Ḥām Mīm al-Sajdah this subject is coming up again. There, God willing, it shall be further explained.

ذٰلِكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْرَحُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَمْرَحُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾[59]

The verse implies that whatever has come before these people is the result of their baseless arrogance and conceit. Whatever they had been blessed with in the previous world was never owned by them; on the contrary, everything was given to them by God and as a result it was their obligation to these things that they thank God for them and show obedience to Him; however, they came to regard these blessings of God to be their personal right, and arrogance and haughtiness got the better of them. Intoxicated with this conceit, they insulted and denied the messengers of God who tried to remind them of the actual reality.

Everything of the heavens and the earth has been created by God and belongs to Him alone. Hence conceit is only befitting for Him and no one else. If anyone else does so then this is بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ (baseless) and he is trying to wear the special robe of the Almighty which is nothing but polytheism. It is towards this reality that the words of the following narrative allude to: الکبریاء ردائی (greatness is my robe).[60]

اُدْخُلُوْٓا اَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾[61]

The implication is that presenting any excuse at this time is of no use. These gates

59. This is because without any basis you showed pride and conceit in the land.
60. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 2, 248, (no. 7376).
61. Enter the gates of Hell to stay therein forever. What an evil abode it is for the arrogant.

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of Hell are open. The reference is to the seven gates of Hell explained at another instance. It shall be said to them: "Enter them and now you shall have to stay here forever and never expect that you will get out of here." While turning the face away from them, it shall be further said: فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ (so what an evil abode is it for the arrogant.)

فَاصْبِرْ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ ۚ فَاِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِیْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿۷۷﴾[62]

These words sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that he should show patience on the misdeeds of his opponents. If they do not mend their ways the punishment with which they are being threatened with is bound to come; either a part of it shall be shown to him in his lifetime and if this does not happen then one day they will have to finally return to God Who will punish them in the Hereafter. Here it may be kept in mind that the messengers of God always warned their people of two types of punishment: the first of them is the one which will visit them in this world if they reject their respective messenger and the second of them is the one which they will face in the Hereafter. The words بَعْضَ الَّذِیْ نَعِدُهُمْ refer to the first of these punishments because with reference to its essence it is part of the punishment of the Hereafter which every disbeliever and idolater will have to necessarily face there. In accordance with the established practice of God about His messengers, the nation of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) was threatened with worldly punishment as well in case they rejected him; however, the majority embraced faith; hence no such punishment visited them as visited the rejecters of the previous messengers; the matter of their mischievous elements was deferred to the Hereafter to which the words فَاِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُوْنَ (so to Us will they be returned) allude to here.

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَّمْ نَقْصُصْ عَلَيْكَ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُوْلٍ اَنْ يَّاْتِیَ بِاٰيَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قُضِیَ بِالْحَقِّ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿۷۸﴾[63]

Here assurance is again sounded through a special aspect. It has been the customary practice of the rejecters of God's messengers that when they were warned by these messengers of God's wrath and punishment, then to pester the messenger their addressees asked their messenger to show them a sample of this punishment. One

62. Therefore, show perseverance. Indeed, the promise of God is bound to come true. Either We will show you a glimpse of the punishment We are threatening them with or give death to you. Thus to Us shall they return.

63. And We sent forth other messengers before you; We have already related the accounts of some to you and there are some others whose accounts We have not related to you. And none of these messengers had the power to show a sign except by God's permission. Thus when God's decree arrives, justice shall prevail and at that time the evil-doers will be among the losers.

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answer to this demand has been given in the previous *sūrah*. Now another aspect of this answer is explained here in this verse: the history of the messengers of God bears witness that a messenger does not have the authority to show such signs; on the contrary, all this depends on the wisdom of God; if it had been a requisite of His wisdom He would have sent this punishment and vice versa; people should neither demand this sign from their messenger nor should a messenger be worried on this demand from his people; this much should remain clear that when the decree of God is delivered complete justice is done and at that time those people are taken to task who deny the truth and reject the messengers of God.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامَ لِتَرْكَبُوْا مِنْهَا وَ مِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿۷۹﴾ وَلَكُمْ فِیْهَا مَنَافِعُ وَلِتَبْلُغُوْا عَلَیْهَا حَاجَةً فِیْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ وَعَلَیْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾ وَیُرِیْكُمْ اٰیٰتِهٖ ۫ فَاَیَّ اٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ تُنْكِرُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾[64]

A demand for the sign of punishment was stated in the previous verse. There the Prophet (sws) was assured that this matter relates to God and hence he should consign it to God. In this verse, attention of those who were demanding a sign of punishment is directed to the signs of God's providence; why do they demand a sign of punishment; why do they not reflect on the numerous signs of God's providence which are found all around them. He created for them four-legged beasts some of which are useful to them as a means of transport; some others are useful in providing food to them; moreover, they have other benefits for them as well. God has created these animals in such a way that people ride on them and go out for various campaigns and realize their plans. This is a reference to the camel which was no less than the ship of the desert for the Arabs. The verse says that people embark on these means of transport to travel long distances and also alight on the ships for their journeys. The verse prods these people by asking them that are these not enough signs of God. How many of the signs will they deny? The implication is that will the Lord Who has made such elaborate arrangement to fulfill their needs let them go scot free and not hold them unaccountable. If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, then this is the very warning which their messenger is sounding to them; so what is this excuse that they have invented to deny his warning that why is God not showing a sign of His punishment. As far as the signs are concerned, they are innumerable; unfortunately, these people do have the eyes to behold them.

اَفَلَمْ یَسِیْرُوْا فِی الْاَرْضِ فَیَنْظُرُوْا كَیْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَانُوْۤا اَكْثَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَاَشَدَّ قُوَّةً وَّاٰثَارًا فِی الْاَرْضِ فَمَاۤ

64. It is God who has created beasts for you so that you can use some to ride on and some others are used as food for you and they have other benefits for you as well and has also created them so that they may fulfill some of your heart's desires; and on them and on ships you are boarded. And He shows you other innumerable signs. So, which of God's signs will you deny?

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اَغۡنٰی عَنۡهُمۡ مَّا كَانُوۡا يَكۡسِبُوۡنَ ﴿۸۲﴾[65]

This verse directs the attention of those people who were demanding to see the punishment to the history of the previous nations: if they are unable to see the signs of providence, then have they not even travelled in their land to see the fate of previous nations who had denied their respective messengers even though they were much more powerful and greater in number and were far superior in their building and constructional feats; however, when the punishment of God came, then none of the things they had gathered and amassed could be of any benefit to them.

The word اٰثَارًا is related to اَكۡثَرَ. It is a reference to he architectural feats of the 'Ād and the Thamūd that have been alluded to at other places of the Qur'ān. It is evident from this that when a nation falls into moral decadence, then it cannot survive merely on the basis of its large numbers or feats that stamp their culture and civilization.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَتۡهُمۡ رُسُلُهُمۡ بِالۡبَيِّنٰتِ فَرِحُوۡا بِمَا عِنۡدَهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡعِلۡمِ وَ حَاقَ بِهِمۡ مَّا كَانُوۡا بِهٖ يَسۡتَهۡزِءُوۡنَ ﴿۸۳﴾[66]

The verse says that when the messengers of God came to these nations with very clear signs about monotheism, the Hereafter and reward and punishment, they made fun of their calls and remained arrogant on what they believed. Eventually, the punishment which they mocked at surrounded them. The implication is that because of their meanness they regarded their meager knowledge to be great and reckoned that whatever they see from their eyes is all that exists and could not comprehend that there is much more beyond what eyes can see.

فَلَمَّا رَاَوۡا بَاۡسَنَا قَالُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَحۡدَهٗ وَ كَفَرۡنَا بِمَا كُنَّا بِهٖ مُشۡرِكِيۡنَ ﴿۸۴﴾ فَلَمۡ يَكُ يَنۡفَعُهُمۡ اِيۡمَانُهُمۡ لَمَّا رَاَوۡا بَاۡسَنَا ؕ سُنَّتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِىۡ قَدۡ خَلَتۡ فِىۡ عِبَادِهٖ ۚ وَ خَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۸۵﴾[67]

These verses refer to the fact that the arguments and reasoning of the messengers did not induce their followers to profess faith. However, when they saw the punishment of God, they immediately declared their faith in the one and only God and denied their deities which they associated with God. They are told that this faith which they are now professing after seeing the punishment was of no avail to them; the

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65. Have they not journeyed through the land to see the fate of those before them. They were more numerous than them in the land with regard to their splendour more powerful than them; yet all their feats were of no use to them.

66. So, when their messengers came to them with very clear signs, they proudly boasted of their own knowledge. And the punishment which they made fun of surrounded them.

67. So, when they beheld Our punishment, they said: "We now believe in the one God and reject those which We served besides Him." But their faith was of no avail to them when they saw Our punishment. Such is the established practice of God which manifested itself among His servants earlier on as well and at that time the disbelievers end up as losers.

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punishment totally routed them. Only that faith is acceptable to God which is embraced on the basis of reasoning before the punishment visits them. If time for this passes and the hour of punishment looms over their heads, then such faith will be absolutely useless to them. The verse states that this has always remained the practice of God with His people. When the punishment arrives, then those who reject it at that time are definitely ruined and humiliated.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah*'*s* exegesis. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (so gratitude be to God on this).

Lahore
27th August 1975
19th Sha'bān 1395 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah Ḥā Mīm al-Sajdah (41)

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Sūrah Ḥā Mīm al-Sajdah

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

Like the previous *sūrah*, the primary subject of this *sūrah* also is *tawḥīd*. Arguments in support of this belief are mentioned in it and also people who were opposing the Qur'ān's call to *tawḥīd* are also warned in it. At the same time, glad tidings of eternal success are given to those believers who were strongly adhering to *tawḥīd* in spite of all the hostile activities of the opposing forces. The Prophet (sws) is told that however much a frenzied and foolish attitude his enemies may adopt, he has to remain patient and steadfast. This is the blessed way and in it lies the success of his call.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-8): In this introductory part of the *sūrah*, it is explained that the Gracious and Ever-Merciful Lord did a great favour to the Arabs when He revealed the Qur'ān in Arabic as a warner and a bearer of glad tidings for them. As an obligation to this favour, people should have given it due consideration and importance; on the contrary, they are rejecting this blessing in a very arrogant manner and instead of embracing faith are demanding to see the punishment they are being warned of. The Prophet (sws) in turn is directed to tell them that he has communicated to them the belief of *tawḥīd* revealed to him; as far as the punishment is concerned, this is not in his jurisdiction; he is a human being and not God.

The believers are urged to seek repentance and show perseverance. They are also given glad tidings of eternal reward. The idolaters are threatened with eternal doom. Instead of professing faith and spending in charity they do not have any fear of the Hereafter on the basis of their alleged deities.

Verses (9-12): The power, wisdom, mercy, providence and organization so evident in this world bears witness that this world is not the product of a merry maker or the play field or battle field of various gods; it has come into existence through the planning of the all-powerful and all-knowing God. So people who have become oblivious to God and the Hereafter because of the intercessors and associates they have set up with God are only waiting for their doom.

Verses (13-18): The Quraysh are warned and threatened that if they have become adamant on rejecting the call of the messenger, they should get ready to meet the fate of nations who reject their messenger. Before them, the 'Ād and the Thamūd adopted a similar attitude; as a result, the torment of God decimated them and the Quraysh

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should remember that as far as power and majesty are concerned, these nations were far superior to them.

Verses (19-24): The idolaters who are hopeful of the intercession of their deities should bear in mind that in the Hereafter their ears, eyes, hands and feet will bear witness against them and no one's intercession will be of any avail to them. On that Day, it will become evident to them that the greatest reason for their destruction was their notion that God does not have knowledge of all the deeds of His servants. On that Day, all doors of hope will close on them. Their only abode shall be Hell. Even if they seek pardon, they will not be granted it.

Verses (25-29): The leaders and their followers – both of whom had gone astray will be brought together in Hell by the Almighty. They have connived with one another against the Qur'ānic call of *tawḥīd*; on that Day, they will witness the consequence of this evil accord. At that time, they will curse one another and the masses who had strayed from the right path will request God to show them those among the jinn and men who led them astray so that they could trample them below their feet.

Verses (30-32): Those who adhered to the truth in spite of all the opposition and conspiracies will be given glad tidings of God's mercy and favours by the angels on the Day of Judgement.

Verses (33-36): The Prophet (sws) is given assurance that he is the bearer of a grand and noble call. If the ignorant are opposing it, then he should counter their ignorance with decency and forgiveness. Though this is a very difficult task yet this is a very grand piece of wisdom which is acquired only by those who adhere to patience and it is these people who are in reality the fortunate. Hence this is the befitting attitude that he and his companions should adopt. If any breach occurs in this attitude because of Satan's latent suggestions, then immediately God's refuge should be sought.

Verses (37-40): The argument stated in the beginning of the *sūrah* in favour of *tawḥīd* and the Hereafter is reinforced by certain other arguments found in the world around man. Abhorrence is expressed for those who in spite of these clear verses are opposing *tawḥīd* and the Hereafter.

Verses (41-44): The introductory part of the *sūrah* had referred to the great favour of the Almighty to the Arabs in the form of the Qur'ān. Here it is corroborated in a new style. Besides alluding to the majesty and exaltedness of the Qur'ān, an answer is given to an objection implanted in the minds of the idolaters by the People of the Book. The real ailment of the rejecters is also alluded to.

Verses (45-46): An objection implanted in the minds of the idolaters by the Jews is answered. The objection was that when the Qur'ān acknowledges the Torah, what was the need of a new divine scripture?

Verses (47-51): People who were making fun of the Hereafter because it was not happening or because the Prophet (sws) cannot give them a date of its arrival are responded to. Those who had no fear of the Hereafter because of their alleged deities are warned that on the Day of Judgement everyone will declare their acquittal from

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these deities. Moreover, sorrow is expressed on the meanness of those who were demanding to hasten the Hereafter: such is the matter of these people that if God even slightly checks them for their misdemeanour, they start groaning. However, when the Almighty gives them respite they start boasting and demanding the punishment.

Verses (52-54): This is the closing section of the *sūrah* in which the horrific fate of denying the Qur'ān is alluded to and a warning is sounded that the signs of the authenticity of the Qur'ān will now manifest themselves in the world within man and that around him. God is watching everything and everything is in His power. Those who are inflicted with doubts will soon see everything with their eyes.

Section II: Verses (1-12)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ﴿۱﴾ تَنۡزِیۡلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ﴿۲﴾ کِتٰبٌ فُصِّلَتۡ اٰیٰتُہٗ قُرۡاٰنًا عَرَبِیًّا لِّقَوۡمٍ یَّعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ بَشِیۡرًا وَّنَذِیۡرًا ۚ فَاَعۡرَضَ
اَکۡثَرُہُمۡ فَہُمۡ لَا یَسۡمَعُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾ وَقَالُوۡا قُلُوۡبُنَا فِیۡۤ اَکِنَّۃٍ مِّمَّا تَدۡعُوۡنَاۤ اِلَیۡہِ وَفِیۡۤ اٰذَانِنَا وَقۡرٌ وَّمِنۡۢ بَیۡنِنَا وَبَیۡنِکَ حِجَابٌ
فَاعۡمَلۡ اِنَّنَا عٰمِلُوۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ قُلۡ اِنَّمَاۤ اَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثۡلُکُمۡ یُوۡحٰۤی اِلَیَّ اَنَّمَاۤ اِلٰـہُکُمۡ اِلٰـہٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَاسۡتَقِیۡمُوۡۤا اِلَیۡہِ وَاسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡہُ ؕ وَوَیۡلٌ
لِّلۡمُشۡرِکِیۡنَ ﴿۶﴾ الَّذِیۡنَ لَا یُؤۡتُوۡنَ الزَّکٰوۃَ وَہُمۡ بِالۡاٰخِرَۃِ ہُمۡ کٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۷﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَہُمۡ اَجۡرٌ غَیۡرُ
مَمۡنُوۡنٍ ﴿۸﴾ قُلۡ اَئِنَّکُمۡ لَتَکۡفُرُوۡنَ بِالَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ الۡاَرۡضَ فِیۡ یَوۡمَیۡنِ وَتَجۡعَلُوۡنَ لَہٗۤ اَنۡدَادًا ؕ ذٰلِکَ رَبُّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۹﴾ وَجَعَلَ
فِیۡہَا رَوَاسِیَ مِنۡ فَوۡقِہَا وَبٰرَکَ فِیۡہَا وَقَدَّرَ فِیۡہَاۤ اَقۡوَاتَہَا فِیۡۤ اَرۡبَعَۃِ اَیَّامٍ ؕ سَوَآءً لِّلسَّآئِلِیۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰۤی اِلَی السَّمَآءِ وَ
ہِیَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَہَا وَلِلۡاَرۡضِ ائۡتِیَا طَوۡعًا اَوۡ کَرۡہًا ؕ قَالَتَاۤ اَتَیۡنَا طَآئِعِیۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ فَقَضٰىہُنَّ سَبۡعَ سَمٰوَاتٍ فِیۡ یَوۡمَیۡنِ وَاَوۡحٰی فِیۡ
کُلِّ سَمَآءٍ اَمۡرَہَا ؕ وَزَیَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنۡیَا بِمَصَابِیۡحَ ۖۚ وَحِفۡظًا ؕ ذٰلِکَ تَقۡدِیۡرُ الۡعَزِیۡزِ الۡعَلِیۡمِ ﴿۱۲﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Ḥā Mīm. The Qur'ān is a revelation of the Compassionate, the Merciful God. This is a Book whose verses are explained in the form of an Arabic Qur'ān for people who want to know: a bearer of glad tidings and warning. Yet their majority evaded it and they are not paying heed to it. And they say: "Our hearts are obstructed from what you call us to and our ears are deaf from the things you tell us and there is a veil that stands between us and you. So, do whatever you want to do; we shall also do what we intend to." (1-5)

Tell them: "I am but a mortal like yourselves. It is revealed to me that your God is one God. Therefore, turn towards Him in total devotion and seek His forgiveness. And destruction is for these idolaters who do not spend in charity and it is they who are the

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real rejecters of the Hereafter." However, those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds, for them is an eternal reward. (6-8).

Ask them: "Do you reject the being Who created the earth in two days and make other gods His partners?" He is the Lord of all the worlds! And He set upon the earth, mountains from above it and placed in it His blessings and provided it with food provisions for all the needy without any exception. This all took four days. Then He turned to the sky and it was in the form of a cloud of vapour at that time. Thus He ordered it and the earth: "Obey the directives whether willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We out of willingness are in your presence." Thus He directed to make them seven skies in two days. And to each sky revealed the obligations related to it. And We adorned the lowest sky with lamps and fully protected it. Such is the planning of the mighty and all-knowing God. (9-12)

Explanation

حٰمٓ ۚ﴿۱﴾ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ۚ﴿۲﴾[1]

حٰمٓ is the Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah*. I have alluded to earlier in the explanation of the previous *sūrahs* that all *sūrahs* which are named حٰمٓ have common subjects. Though grammatically it would have been correct to regard حٰمٓ as the inchoative (*mubtadā'*) and the succeeding sentence as the enunciative (*khabar*), yet in my opinion حٰمٓ is an independent sentence whose inchoative is suppressed. I have translated it accordingly.

In the opinion of this writer, the inchoative in تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ is suppressed. The translation keeping in view this suppression would be: The Qur'ān is a revelation of the Compassionate, the Merciful God. In the previous *sūrah*, it was similarly said thus: تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ (٤٠:٢) (The revelation of this Book is from God, the Mighty One, the All-Knowing, (40:2)).

The verse succeeding the one under discussion has also explained this. Thus the words are: كِتٰبٌ فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ.

I have already discussed the implications of the word تَنْزِيْلٌ at an appropriate place of this exegesis: it expresses thoroughness, diligence and majesty. In other words, this book has been revealed very thoroughly and in a grand manner by the Compassionate and Merciful God. The various aspects of the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty in its revelation have been referred to at relevant instances of this exegesis.

From among the glorious names of God, the two referred to here are: الرَّحْمٰنِ and الرَّحِيْمِ. It is evident from this that it is God's attribute of mercy which is responsible for the revelation of the Qur'ān for people in such an elaborate and thorough manner. This fact is also referred to in Sūrah al-Raḥmān thus: اَلرَّحْمٰنُ. عَلَّمَ الْقُرْاٰنَ (٥٥:١-٢) (It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'ān, (55:1-2)), The reason that these attributes are cited here is to pinpoint the horrendous nature of the denial of these people who are

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guilty of not valuing a great mercy ie., the Qur'ān, and instead of embracing faith are demanding to see the punishment of God the Qur'ān is warning them of. In other words, they are being told that the gracious and merciful Lord revealed to them a great mercy and blessing but because of their wretched nature they are demanding torment instead of mercy from Him. This motif will gradually become evident from the succeeding verses.

كِتٰبٌ فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ﴿۳﴾ بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۚ فَاَعْرَضَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۴﴾[2]

This is the second enunciative after the first and a detail of the mercy and favour of God which He bestowed on the people of Arabia in the form of the Qur'ān revealed in Arabic so that they do not find any difficulty in understanding it. Had this not been the case, they would have objected as to why the Almighty did not send His revelation in their language. Thus in a later verse of this very *sūrah*, this objection is explained thus:

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا اَعْجَمِيًّا لَّقَالُوْا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ ؕ ءَاَعْجَمِيٌّ وَّعَرَبِيٌّ. (٤١:٤٤)

And had We revealed the Qur'an in a foreign tongue, these people would have objected: "Why were not its verses were expounded?" The discourse in a foreign tongue, and the addressees Arabs?" (41:44)

In the expression لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ, the verb, in my opinion, connotes intention. In other words, what is implied is that the Almighty made all this elaborate arrangement for those who intend to know and understand. As for those who are devoid of any intention to know, all this arrangement is of no avail to them. This style induces and urges the Arabs that they should be eager and enthusiastic about knowing because they were not recipients of any divine scripture and it was the first time that the Almighty out of His mercy revealed to them His book in their own language to teach them.

The words بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا express a second attribute of the Qur'ān: it was revealed as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. For those who accept it are glad tidings of success both in this world and in that to come and for those who reject it are warnings of a dreadful torment from God. In other words, no one should take the Qur'ān lightly. It is the greatest mercy as well as the greatest torment. Hence those who are bent upon opposing it should fully contemplate its consequences.

The words فَاَعْرَضَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ refer to the fact that most people have not given the Qur'ān this importance; in fact, they ignored it by regarding it to be something ordinary and are not ready to listen to or understand it. They do not realize that it is not merely the sermon of a sermonizer; on the contrary, it is a divine warning and whatever it is

2. This is a Book whose verses are explained in the form of an Arabic Qur'ān for people who want to know: a bearer of glad tidings and warning. Yet their majority evaded it and they are not paying heed to it.

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informing them of shall necessarily materialize.

وَقَالُوْا قُلُوْبُنَا فِيْٓ اَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَّمِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ فَاعْمَلْ اِنَّنَا عٰمِلُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾[3]

This verse mentions the detail of the evasion shown by the disbelievers of not listening to the Prophet (sws) and his companions, as referred to by the previous verse: they would remark with great arrogance and haughtiness that their hearts are totally closed to what the Prophet (sws) and his companions are calling them. In other words, they imply that this call has not been able to influence their hearts in the slightest way. This comment is the same as the one the Jews would make. It is cited in the Qur'ān by the words: وَقَالُوْا قُلُوْبُنَا غُلْفٌ (۲:۸۸) (They said: "Our hearts have covers," (2:88)). I have already explained the word اَكِنَّةٌ at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

Words to the effect فِيْٓ اِسْتِمَاعِ الْقُرْاٰنِ are suppressed after وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ. The parallel clause مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ points to this suppression. I have translated this verse keeping in view this aspect. What is thus meant is: Our ears are blind to the Qur'ān you are reading out to us.

The words وَمِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ imply that a great gulf of beliefs, ideologies and religion separates them from the Prophet (sws) and his companions. So wide is this gulf that there is no chance of any proximity.

The words فَاعْمَلْ اِنَّنَا عٰمِلُوْنَ point to the fact that when such a wide gulf separates them that no chance of any communication remains then the Prophet (sws) and his companions should do what they want to and they (ie the adversaries) too will do what they intend to without any hesitation. Though not expressed explicitly in words, if the words: بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا mentioned earlier in verse 4 are taken into consideration, the word فَاعْمَلْ refers to the demand of punishment these enemies used to make. In other words, they are saying that the Prophet (sws) and his companions should bring about the punishment whose warning and threat they are sounding to them in the Qur'ān; otherwise they would in any case do whatever they have in mind.

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَاسْتَقِيْمُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوْهُ ؕ وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۶﴾ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۷﴾[4]

These verses give an answer through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) to the demand concealed in the word فَاعْمَلْ, as delineated above. He is asked to inform them that he is a

3. And they say: "Our hearts are obstructed from what you call us to and our ears are deaf from the things you tell us and there is a veil that stands between us and you. So, do whatever you want to do; we shall also do what we intend to."

4. Tell them: "I am but a mortal like yourselves. It is revealed to me that your God is one God. Therefore, turn towards Him in total devotion and seek His forgiveness. And destruction is for these idolaters who do not spend in charity and it is they who are the real rejecters of the Hereafter."

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human being like them; he is not God so that he is able to bring the punishment at their demand or do whatever comes in his mind; he does not have any such authority; however, it has been divinely revealed to him that their Lord is one; no one is His partner or associate; so they should fully devote themselves to Him and should seek pardon from Him on being incriminated with the filth of polytheism till now and turn towards their real Lord; and they should also clearly bear in mind that devastation awaits all the polytheists who do not spend in the way of God and are not fearful of Him because of their alleged intercessors; it is they who are the real rejecters of the Hereafter.

In the expression لَا يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ the word الزَّكٰوةَ refers to spending in the cause of God. This word is used to convey this meaning in the Makkan period as well. In Madīnah, a specified form of it was prescribed and then the word started to be used in this meaning. Here this word is used in its general meaning and it was conventionally used in this meaning at that time.

The overall implied meaning of this answer given from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) is that it is not in his authority to bring about the threatened punishment; only God has this authority; however, his opponents must stand warned that devastation awaits the polytheists who instead of embracing faith and doing righteous deeds are depending on their alleged deities and intercessors.

The repetition of the inchoative (*mubtadā'*) in the sentence وَ هُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ has incorporated a special emphasis in it. The sentence does not merely mean that these people are rejecters of the Hereafter; an accurate translation would be: "It is only they who are the rejecters of the Hereafter." The consequence of this emphasis is that no one should be misconceived by the fact that there is any worth of their belief in the Hereafter because they believe in it even though with their concepts of polytheism and intercession. It is firmly asserted that those who think that whatever their deeds their intercessors and partners of God would be able to win salvation for them cannot be regarded as believers of the Hereafter; in fact, they are its real rejecters. The reason why this is said with such stress and emphasis is that these people have totally negated God's justice and wisdom on which the Hereafter is based. Others who have rejected the Hereafter have rejected because they think that it is far-fetched or that they have some doubts about it; however, these people have totally razed to ground the bulwark of the philosophy of the Hereafter. In the succeeding verses, readers will see that the Qur'ān has clearly called polytheism as disbelief. The reason for this is that polytheism in fact negates all the primary attributes of God. After a negation of these attributes no difference remains between believing in God and disbelieving in Him.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُوْنٍ ﴿٨﴾[5]

In contrast to the warning sounded above, this verse sounds glad tidings that

5. However, those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds, for them is an eternal reward.

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unending reward is only for those people who embrace faith and do righteous deeds or in other words will adhere to the belief of monotheism without the slightest trace of polytheism and fulfill with full sincerity and perseverance the obligations they owe to worshipping God and showing obedience to Him.

Some people have interpreted the expression غَيْرُ مَمْنُوْنٍ differently. However, the parallels of the Qur'ān reinforce my interpretation. At one place, a similar expression viz. عَطَآءً غَيْرَ مَجْذُوْذٍ (۱۱:۱۰۸) is used. Obviously, it means favours which shall never cease.

قُلْ اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُوْنَ بِالَّذِیْ خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ فِیْ یَوْمَیْنِ وَتَجْعَلُوْنَ لَهٗۤ اَنْدَادًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ۚ﴿۹﴾[6]

In this verse, attention is directed to the signs of God's power, providence, wisdom and *tawḥīd* found in the system constituted by the heavens and the earth, and in verse 12 ahead the substance of this discussion is put forth in the words: ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِیْرُ الْعَزِیْزِ الْعَلِیْمِ. In other words, whoever deliberates on this world with regard to these aspects will be forced to acknowledge that neither did this world come into being of its own accord nor is it a place of entertainment of a merry-maker nor is it the battle-ground of various deities; on the contrary, it has come into being on account of the planning and wisdom of the all powerful and all knowing God. This topic is spread over four verses. For this reason, for the convenience of the readers, I will first discuss each of these verses separately and then present their summary at the end and later try to dispel the various objections that can be raised on it.

Consider first, the first of these verses quoted earlier. It is said: "Do you people deny the being who created this earth in two days and set up partners with Him; it is He Who is the Lord of the world."

The first thing worthy of consideration is that though the verse addresses the idolaters of the Quraysh who never denied God yet the Qur'ān has regarded their polytheism as disbelief (اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُوْنَ). The reason for this is that only that belief in God is considerable which takes into account all His attributes, rights and consequences of these attributes. If someone believes in God but believes in Him in such a way that he negates some or all of His attributes, then this belief is not acceptable and in fact amounts to disbelief. For this reason, the Qur'ān has called polytheism as disbelief at many places, and has explicitly addressed the idolaters as: قُلْ یٰۤاَیُّهَا الْكٰفِرُوْنَ. (۱۰۹:۱) (Proclaim: "O you Disbelievers!" (109:1)). Earlier the interpretation I have presented viz a viz the idolaters being the rejecters of the Hereafter may also be kept in mind by the readers. Both are in fact based on the same principle.

In the expression: فِیْ یَوْمَیْنِ "two days" do not mean two earth days as has been explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis; it actually means the two days of

6. Ask them: "Do you reject the being Who created the earth in two days and make other gods His partners?" He is the Lord of all the worlds!

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God. A day of God is equivalent to one thousand earth days and in some cases to be fifty thousand earth days. For this reason, the word "day" should be interpreted to mean "phases."

At other places in the Qur'ān, it is stated that the heavens and the earth and their accessories were created in six days. Here, details of this overall span are mentioned as to how much days were spent in the creation of the components. It is stated here that the earth was created in two days. No one was God's partner or helper in this task; in spite of this, the idolaters set up partners and associates with Him. Even though He Who created the earth is also its Lord and the Lord of all the universe. In other words, He is the Lord of all this because He alone is their creator. However, such is the foolishness of these people that contrary to the dictates of human intellect and nature and without any reason they have set up His partners and associates. It may be borne in mind that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the creator of the heavens and the earth and in fact everything; yet they still imputed partners to Him. It is because of this very fact that they were reprimanded.

وَجَعَلَ فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبٰرَكَ فِيْهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيْهَآ اَقْوَاتَهَا فِيْٓ اَرْبَعَةِ اَيَّامٍ ؕ سَوَآءً لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾[7]

This verse mentions the details of the blessings found in the earth: it is God Who set forth mountains on it. At another place in the Qur'ān (32:10), it is stated that the wisdom behind this was to maintain the earth's balance lest it may have tumbled away with all its creatures. The purpose of mentioning the words: مِنْ فَوْقِهَا (from above them) is that all these signs of God's power are not hidden; they are found on the surface of the earth and can be observed by everyone. In Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah, attention is directed to the mountains with reference to this very aspect in the following words: اَفَلَا يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَى الْاِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ.وَ اِلَى السَّمَآءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ.وَ اِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ.وَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ. (۸۸:۱۷-۲۰) (Do they not see the camels, how they have been made? And do they not behold the sky, how it has been raised high? And do they not look at the mountains, how they have been set aloft? And do they not see the earth, how it has been spread out? (17-20))

The words وَبٰرَكَ فِيْهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيْهَآ اَقْوَاتَهَا refer to the fact that God placed various benefits and blessings within the earth and also placed in it all types of sustenance.

It is a result of these blessings that the earth brings forth all kinds of vegetation whose fruits and flowers are of benefit to man and other creatures. It is because of these blessings that man sows one seed and the earth gives him several hundred seeds in return as its produce. A person sows one seed or a sapling and his descendants are able to benefit from its fruit for a very long time. Moreover, it is because of these blessings that the more advancements man makes through science for discovering the potentials of the earth, the more he is blessed with its hidden treasures. It is very

7. And He set upon the earth, mountains from above it and placed in it His blessings and provided it with food provisions for all the needy without any exception. This all took four days.

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apparent that perhaps tools of scientific inquiry may become exhausted but the treasures of this earth will never diminish.

The words وَ قَدَّرَ فِيْهَآ اَقْوَاتَهَا allude to the fact that God will place provisions of sustenance in the earth in proportion to the number of creatures He has placed in the earth or will place in it. Through man's planning and efforts, these provisions will continue to be furnished till the Day of Judgement. The Almighty has consigned to the earth's custody the sustenance of every creature created by Him, and has also guided man how to extract it.

The words فِيْٓ اَرْبَعَةِ اَيَّامٍ refer to the fact that all these tasks took four days. In other words, the time taken to create the earth and setting forth mountains on it and placing provisions within it took four days. This is the total time consumed for these tasks.

The words سَوَآءً لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ allude to the fact that all these reserves found in the earth are in accordance with the instinctive needs of all the creatures created by God and of the nature of need each possesses for its sustenance. It is not the case that some creatures were created while the sustenance they needed was never provided. Whether on the peaks of the mountains, the pits of the earth or the darkness of the seas there is sustenance found for the tiniest or the greatest of creatures in their environment. A goat lives on grass and for it the Almighty has created grass; a lion lives on meat; the Almighty has not only equipped it to hunt for its needs but also made animals as its preys. It is also very evident that no creature is compelled to develop harmony with what it needs; whatever each receives is totally in harmony with its respective instincts. It is to this reality that the Almighty has directed our attention in the above cited words: it could only have been the majesty of God to have created so many types of creatures and then for every genre and type provide sustenance to it in accordance with its instinctive needs. Who else than God can have the power to do this?

The word سؤال is used in this verse in the same meaning as in: وَ اٰتٰىكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُ. (۱۴:۳۴) (and gave you from everything which you needed, (14:34)). In other words, God provided us with all those things which were instinctively needed by us.

There is no need to negate the ideology of communism which some people have tried to derive from this section of the verse; I have referred to the true interpretation of this verse, and this alone is our responsibility. Who else than God has the authority to engender the ability in a person to accept and understand the truth?

ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰٓى اِلَى السَّمَآءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْاَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا اَوْ كَرْهًا ؕ قَالَتَآ اَتَيْنَا طَآئِعِيْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾[8]

The expression اسْتَوٰٓى اِلَى الشَّيْءِ means to "to direct attention to that thing;" "to make an intention of that thing." It is said that after creating the earth in the afore-mentioned

8. Then He turned to the sky and it was in the form of a cloud of vapour at that time. Thus He ordered it and the earth: "Obey the directives whether willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We out of willingness are in your presence."

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stages, the Almighty directed His attention to the sky which was in the form of a cloud. The cloud refers to dust and vapour particles or in scientific terms can be called nebula. It is evident from this that the sky present at that time was in its rudimentary and unfinished state. This state of the sky was obviously formed in the two days in which the earth was in its initial stages of creation. For this reason, the word اسْتَوٰٓى refers to the attention needed to complete the creation of the sky found in its rudimentary state. It is evident from the succeeding verses that in this final stage the Almighty created seven skies from it and subjected it each of them to their laws. It is evident from this that the creation of the sky and the earth began at the same time; however, just as in an expansive building due to various reasons at times one part of that building is focused on for further construction and at times another part, similar was the case with bringing into being the sky and the earth. Thus, the question whether the earth was created first or the sky is irrelevant. The planning of a building necessarily takes place once. The essential material for its construction is provided; though work begins with the foundations and walls, yet before they are complete work on the roof begins; while work remains regarding the roof, time comes to plaster the walls; once this is completed, the remaining work on the roof requires to be finished. Once this is accomplished, attention is directed to the floors. In short, the construction of a building has many different and integrated stages, and one needs to reflect on them on this basis.

Though this small example just cited is not commensurate with the huge and expansive nature of the sky and the earth, yet to understand the creation of the sky and the earth this analogous example will need to be understood. This is because the Qur'ān has mentioned both of them together in the capacity of a building. At times, the sky is mentioned before the earth, and, at times the earth is mentioned before the sky. At times, one thinks that the roof is made before the floor, and at other times one thinks that the floor has been completed before the roof. The fact is that all these thoughts arise because the earth and sky are not looked upon collectively but rather individually. Readers may content themselves here with these hints. *Inshā'Allāh*, in verses 30-33 of Sūrah al-Nāzi'āt, more details on this issue will be furnished.

The words فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْاَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا اَوْ كَرْهًا ۭ قَالَتَآ اَتَيْنَا طَاۗىِٕعِيْنَ refer to the fact that after creating both the sky and the earth, they were told that they will have to obey God whether willingly or unwillingly; the sky and the earth responded by saying that they are willingly obedient to God. It is evident from this that every object of this universe that instinctively obeys the Almighty obeys Him willingly and not under any compulsion. This is because the Almighty has created the instinct of each object on the mould of Islam. In other words, every object of this universe is Muslim with regards to its instincts. If angels do not disobey God, it is not because they are compelled to obey Him; it is rather because their nature is in such accordance with Islam that they cannot deviate from it.

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The style found in the expression اَتَيْنَا طَآئِعِيْنَ is very similar to what Solomon (sws) wrote to the queen of Sheba: (۲۷:۳۱) وَ اْتُوْنِيْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ. Those who have interpreted this expression differently have been mistaken because they have not appreciated its linguistic style.

It is evident from this verse that the objects of this world which we regard to be non-living and unintelligent understand the directives of their Lord, respond to and follow them are fully aware in extolling Him and celebrating His praises. Thus the word uttered by the sky and the earth is طَآئِعِيْنَ, as cited in this verse. Now this word is only appropriate to be used by those who are living and possess intention. If we human beings are not able to understand the way they worship God or are not able to speak to them, we do not have the right to regard them as unintelligent and deprived of intellect; in fact, this is the limitation of our own knowledge. The Almighty understands the worship utterances of each and every particle of this universe, and every particle understands and follows His directives.

فَقَضٰىهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ فِيْ يَوْمَيْنِ وَاَوْحٰى فِيْ كُلِّ سَمَآءٍ اَمْرَهَا ؕ وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيْحَ ۖ وَحِفْظًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ ﴿۱۲﴾[9]

It is evident from this verse that when the Almighty directed His attention towards the sky it was in its very rudimentary form and required finishing touches. This is evident from the plural pronoun in فَقَضٰىهُنَّ and from later textual indications. It is said that God commanded them to become seven skies.

The words وَ اَوْحٰى فِيْ كُلِّ سَمَآءٍ اَمْرَهَا refer to the fact that the Almighty revealed to each of the skies the duties it has in the whole system of this universe.

The words وَ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيْحَ allude to the fact that the Almighty decked the lowest sky with lamps. Here the change of style may be kept in consideration. The previous words were uttered in an indirect style without addressing the entities under discussion; these words are directly addressed. I have alluded to the eloquence found in this change of style at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

The verbal noun وَحِفْظًا is meant for emphasis. A precise translation keeping in view this aspect would be: We strongly protected the lowest sky from the incursions of the devils. I have explained this at a number of places in this exegesis and in Sūrah al-Jinn ahead more details *inshā'Allāh* shall be divulged. All these tasks were accomplished in two days, and the sum total of all these days comes out to be six. In other words, these verses explains the details of what is stated at other places in the Qur'ān that it took God six days to create the sky and the earth.

The words ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ summarize all these details: whoever reflects on this

9. Thus He directed to make them seven skies in two days. And to each sky revealed the obligations related to it. And We adorned the lowest sky with lamps and fully protected it. Such is the planning of the mighty and all-knowing God.

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great universe will conclude that it has been created by the planning of an all-powerful and all-knowing God; it has not come into being accidentally; it has great wisdom in its planning, and this planning is from a being Who is powerful and dominant over everything; nothing is beyond His authority; at the same time, His knowledge is all-embracing; each and every thing in the farthest corners of this universe is also in His knowledge; He is also aware of the needs of each and everything and also cognizant of the role they have in the collective system of this universe. If this summary is kept in mind together with the question posed initially: … أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِی (do you reject the being …), then the whole discourse would be: "This universe by virtue of its very existence bears testimony that it has been made by an all-powerful and all-knowing God and is under His control only; however, such is your ignorance that by setting up many hypothetical deities as His partners you are rejecting Him." This statement is given in the form of a question to express wonder and disgust. In other words, what is implied is that there is no justification for such foolishness; however, when people lose their senses, then no act of foolishness is beyond them.

Though the teaching which emanates from these verses has been alluded to while explaining the verses, yet since this teaching relates to the basic wisdom of religion, at the end a reminder of this seems very apt:

The first thing evident from these verses is that this world has been created very gradually and with great wisdom according to a specific plan. It is wrong to believe that it was created merely for entertainment without any purpose and will continue or end like this. This elaborate arrangement is an indubitable testimony to it being created with a purpose and if it has a purpose to it, then this entails that a Day of Judgement has to come.

Secondly, its Creator has immeasurable power and infinite knowledge; hence for this task of creation neither did He require anyone's help nor is anyone capable enough to help Him.

Thirdly, the sky and the earth are like a building in which God has placed man. Hence this notion is self-evidently wrong that two different beings control its roof and floor. On the contrary, the harmony found between the sky and the earth bears witness that the all-powerful and all-knowing God Who created them is also controlling them alone.

Fourthly, the all-embracing system of providence found in this world bears testimony that it is created by the powerful and knowing God; no one else is capable of setting up such a system; for this reason, His servants should only plead and implore Him because He is the real being Who can harm and benefit others.

Fifthly, this wide system of providence entails that a day come in which people come before the God Who has in fact blessed them with favours and be held accountable for them; those who recognized the obligations they owe to these favours should be rewarded and those who adopted an ungrateful attitude be punished for this behaviour.

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Section II: Verses (13-24)

In the succeeding verses, in order to warn the Quraysh the details of the humiliating punishment meted out to some previous nations which rejected their respective messenger are presented. The coherence in the discourse is very evident. Readers may proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

فَاِنۡ اَعۡرَضُوۡا فَقُلۡ اَنۡذَرۡتُكُمۡ صٰعِقَةً مِّثۡلَ صٰعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَّ ثَمُوۡدَ ﴿۱۳﴾ اِذۡ جَآءَتۡهُمُ الرُّسُلُ مِنۡۢ بَيۡنِ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهِمۡ اَلَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡۤا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ قَالُوۡا لَوۡ شَآءَ رَبُّنَا لَاَنۡزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً فَاِنَّا بِمَاۤ اُرۡسِلۡتُمۡ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ فَاَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ بِغَيۡرِ الۡحَقِّ وَ قَالُوۡا مَنۡ اَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً ؕ اَوَلَمۡ يَرَوۡا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَهُمۡ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنۡهُمۡ قُوَّةً ؕ وَ كَانُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجۡحَدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ فَاَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ رِيۡحًا صَرۡصَرًا فِىۡۤ اَيَّامٍ نَّحِسَاتٍ لِّنُذِيۡقَهُمۡ عَذَابَ الۡخِزۡىِ فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ؕ وَلَعَذَابُ الۡاٰخِرَةِ اَخۡزٰى وَهُمۡ لَا يُنۡصَرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾ وَ اَمَّا ثَمُوۡدُ فَهَدَيۡنٰهُمۡ فَاسۡتَحَبُّوا الۡعَمٰى عَلَى الۡهُدٰى فَاَخَذَتۡهُمۡ صٰعِقَةُ الۡعَذَابِ الۡهُوۡنِ بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَكۡسِبُوۡنَ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَنَجَّيۡنَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ كَانُوۡا يَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَيَوۡمَ يُحۡشَرُ اَعۡدَآءُ اللّٰهِ اِلَى النَّارِ فَهُمۡ يُوۡزَعُوۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا مَا جَآءُوۡهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ سَمۡعُهُمۡ وَ اَبۡصَارُهُمۡ وَ جُلُوۡدُهُمۡ بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَ قَالُوۡا لِجُلُوۡدِهِمۡ لِمَ شَهِدۡتُّمۡ عَلَيۡنَا ؕ قَالُوۡۤا اَنۡطَقَنَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡطَقَ كُلَّ شَىۡءٍ وَّ هُوَ خَلَقَكُمۡ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّ اِلَيۡهِ تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَ مَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَسۡتَتِرُوۡنَ اَنۡ يَّشۡهَدَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ سَمۡعُكُمۡ وَ لَاۤ اَبۡصَارُكُمۡ وَ لَا جُلُوۡدُكُمۡ وَ لٰكِنۡ ظَنَنۡتُمۡ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَعۡلَمُ كَثِيۡرًا مِّمَّا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ وَ ذٰلِكُمۡ ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِىۡ ظَنَنۡتُمۡ بِرَبِّكُمۡ اَرۡدٰىكُمۡ فَاَصۡبَحۡتُمۡ مِّنَ الۡخٰسِرِيۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ فَاِنۡ يَّصۡبِرُوۡا فَالنَّارُ مَثۡوًى لَّهُمۡ ۚ وَاِنۡ يَّسۡتَعۡتِبُوۡا فَمَا هُمۡ مِّنَ الۡمُعۡتَبِيۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

So, if they pay no heed, tell them: "I inform you of a thunderbolt, like the thunderbolt which struck the 'Ād and the Thamūd. When their messengers came to them from their front and from behind them with the message: "worship none but God," they answered: "had it been our Lord's desire, He would have sent down angels; so we reject the message with which you have been sent." (13-14)

As for 'Ad, without any basis they showed arrogance in the land and said: "Who is mightier than us in power?" Did they not reflect on the fact that the God who had created them was mightier than they? Yet they continued to deny Our revelations. So, over a few ill-omened days We let loose on them a stormy wind to make them taste a humiliating punishment in the life of this world and the punishment of the next world will be much more humiliating and they shall not be helped there. (15-16)

As for the Thamūd, We showed them the path of guidance but they preferred blindness to guidance. Therefore the thunderbolt of a humiliating punishment struck them also for their misdeeds; and We delivered those who believed and were fearful. (17)

And bear in mind the Day when the enemies of God will be gathered towards Hell;

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thus they shall be divided into categories. Until when they come near it, their ears, their eyes, and the hair on their skins will testify to what they had been doing. And they will say to their skins: "Why did you testify against us?" They will reply: "God, who gives speech to all things, has given us speech. And it was He Who created you the first time and now you are being returned to Him alone. (18-21)

And you did not fear that your ears and your eyes and the hair on the skins of your bodies would testify against you. Moreover, you further thought that God does not know much of what you do. It is this estimation of yours about your Lord that doomed you and you ended up among the losers." (22-23)

Thus if they show patience, Hell is their abode and if they seek pardon, they shall not be granted pardon. (24)

Explanation

فَاِنۡ اَعۡرَضُوۡا فَقُلۡ اَنۡذَرۡتُكُمۡ صٰعِقَةً مِّثۡلَ صٰعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَّ ثَمُوۡدَ ﴿۱۳﴾[10]

The aversion and indifference of the Quraysh is mentioned in verses 3-4 earlier. This verse while alluding to it says that if they have decided to show indifference, the Prophet (sws) should inform them that if they have made this decision, then he warns them of the punishment of the thunderbolt that was inflicted on the 'Ād, the Thamūd and other nations who followed their ways. It is evident from the style of the verse that the 'Ād and the Thamūd are only mentioned as examples. The purpose is to allude to the fate of all the nations which were destroyed for denying their respective messenger. Earlier *sūrahs* describe this fate in detail.

The word صَاعِقَةٌ (thunderbolt) is mentioned as a prominent sign of the punishment through which these nations were destroyed. At other places, I have explained in detail that this punishment was an amalgam of stormy winds from the south, hail, lightning and thunder. Thus the Qur'ān has mentioned this punishment in different words. Here too it has been mentioned through one of its prominent feature ie صَاعِقَةٌ. However, the purpose is to refer to its other components as well that are mentioned at other instances in the Qur'ān and some of them are mentioned in the succeeding verses as well.

اِذۡ جَآءَتۡهُمُ الرُّسُلُ مِنۡۢ بَيۡنِ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهِمۡ اَلَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡۤا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ قَالُوۡا لَوۡ شَآءَ رَبُّنَا لَاَنۡزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً فَاِنَّا بِمَاۤ اُرۡسِلۡتُمۡ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾[11]

Though the Qur'ān mentions only two messengers – Hūd (sws) and Ṣāliḥ (sws) –

10. So, if they pay no heed, tell them: "I inform you of a thunderbolt, like the thunderbolt which struck the 'Ād and the Thamūd."

11. When their messengers came to them from their front and from behind them with the message: "worship none but God," they answered: "had it been our Lord's desire, He would have sent down angels; so we reject the message with which you have been sent."

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that were sent to these two nations. However, the word رُسُلُ (messengers) is used in the plural form for the very reason referred to earlier: these nations are only mentioned as examples. The purpose is to point to all the nations who followed their evil ways and rejected their respective messengers.

The words مِنۢ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ refer to the relentless and comprehensive efforts undertaken by these messengers viz the viz presenting the message of monotheism to their people. The challenge given by Satan to lead Adam (sws) astray is expressed in the Qur'ān by the words: لَاٰتِيَنَّهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ. (۷:۱۷) (I shall get hold of them from in front of them and from behind them, (7:17)). The Qur'ān here while pointing out this characteristic devotion of the messengers has explained that God, in order to save their respective nations from the trials of Satan, sent such messengers who devotedly and passionately expended all their efforts to guide these people to the truth.

The words قَالُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّنَا لَاَنْزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً فَاِنَّا بِمَآ اُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ imply that on the contrary the importance they gave to the effort of the messengers was that they denied their messengerhood. The stance they took was that had the Almighty intended to send messengers He would have sent angels as messengers and not human beings like them; since the messenger sent to them is a human being they are not prepared to accept him. Thus they totally rejected the message (reference is to the message of *tawḥīd*) with which the messenger had come to them. The sarcasm found in فَاِنَّا بِمَآ اُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ is not concealed from those who have a flair for language. They meant that the message with which these people have come to them stands totally rejected by them; in other words, they neither accept the messenger sent to them nor the message he intends to deliver. Hence no one should try to overawe them with bluffs.

فَاَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوْا مَنْ اَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً ؕ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً ؕ وَ كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾[12]

This is a brief description of the attitude these people adopted against the warnings of the messengers. The 'Ād are mentioned first because they preceded the rest chronologically. The verse states that instead of being grateful on the power and majesty blessed to them by the Almighty, they showed arrogance and haughtiness in the land. Their arrogance is called بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ (unjustifiable). The reason for this, as referred to at an appropriate place of this exegesis, is that it is only justifiable for the Creator and Master of this universe to think big of Himself. This is not justifiable for any other being.

12. As for 'Ad, without any basis they showed arrogance in the land and said: "Who is mightier than us in power?" Did they not reflect on the fact that the God who had created them was mightier than they? Yet they continued to deny Our revelations.

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The words وَقَالُوْا مَنْ اَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً explain their arrogance. This is the answer they gave to the warnings of the messenger of God who told them that if they persist with their ways they will soon be seized by God. They said that if their attitude was one which was allegedly taking them to doom then should its consequence be that today they stand unparalleled in might and majesty. For this reason, their contention is that they are not treading the path of doom; in fact, those who are threatening them of this fate are insane and lunatics.

The words اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً answer their aforementioned foolish challenge: had they the slightest sense in them, they would have easily understood that the God Who has created them as well as the whole universe is much much more mighty and powerful than them. Whenever and wherever He wants, He can seize them and there is no one who can stop Him in any way.

The words وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ are connected to the actual discourse and the words اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً in fact form a parenthetical sentence that was meant to instantaneously respond to their challenge. In other words, the implied meaning is that because of their arrogance they were not prepared to listen to or understand anything. With great stubbornness they continued to reject the verses recited and the signs shown to them by the messengers of God.

فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا صَرْصَرًا فِیْٓ اَيَّامٍ نَّحِسَاتٍ لِّنُذِيْقَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْیِ فِی الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَخْزٰی وَهُمْ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾[13]

The words رِيْحًا صَرْصَرًا refer to the strong wind that blows in winters in Arabia from the north. It carries with it the winter clouds as well as thunder and lightning.

The expression اَيَّامٍ نَّحِسَاتٍ also refers to the very cold winter days in which because of extreme cold everything becomes lonely, sorrowful and dry and it seems that it has been struck by some bad omen.

The verse says that since these people have become arrogant and have shown evasion to the truth, the Almighty in order to make them taste a humiliating punishment in this world has let loose on them strong winds in the desolate days of winter that has totally routed them. In this manner, they stood humiliated not only in the eyes of people before whom they vociferously proclaimed مَنْ اَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً (who is greater than us in might) but also became an example in the eyes of other nations similar to them. Moreover, after this worldly punishment they will also have to face another punishment in the Hereafter which will be much more humiliating in extent. This is because this humiliation will be eternal and also take place before all creatures

13. So, over a few ill-omened days We let loose on them a stormy wind to make them taste a humiliating punishment in the life of this world and the punishment of the next world be much more humiliating and they shall not be helped there.

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of God.

The words وَهُمْ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ refer to the fact that on that Day none shall help them. The power and might which they were proud of will also not come to their rescue nor will their deities be of any avail to them while supporting whom they denied God and His messengers.

وَاَمَّا ثَمُوْدُ فَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمٰى عَلَى الْهُدٰى فَاَخَذَتْهُمْ صٰعِقَةُ الْعَذَابِ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾[14]

The above verse states that a similar fate was met by the Thamūd after the 'Ād. The Almighty opened the doors of His guidance to them but they preferred their errant ways to this guidance. At last, the Almighty humiliatingly seized them too in retribution of their deeds and they were totally routed. It may be kept in mind that the nature of this torment was the same as has been mentioned viz a viz the 'Ād. I have presented these details in the light of parallel verses at an appropriate place in this exegesis.

وَنَجَّيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَكَانُوْا يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾[15]

This verse refers to people whom the Almighty secured from these torments. It is the established practice of God that those who profess faith in the messengers of God and adopt a virtuous life after being cautioned by their warnings are saved from torment by the Almighty. This verse refers to the believers among the nations of both the 'Ād and the Thamūd. At other places of the Qur'ān, it is mentioned that those among these nations who professed faith were secured from torment by the Almighty along with the messenger.

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُ اَعْدَآءُ اللّٰهِ اِلَى النَّارِ فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾[16]

After a mention of the worldly punishment in the previous verses, this verse mentions the humiliation and punishment they would face in the Hereafter.

The preposition اِلَى after يُحْشَرُ shows that the latter word encompasses the meaning of يُسَاقُوْن (they shall be driven) or a word of similar meaning.

The word يُوْزَعُوْنَ has been explained under verse 17 of Sūrah al-Naml. In my opinion, it means that people shall be categorized. Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir has given due consideration to this aspect in his translation of the verse.[17]

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14. As for the Thamūd, We showed them the path of guidance but they preferred blindness to guidance. Therefore the thunderbolt of a humiliating punishment struck them also for their misdeeds;

15. And We delivered those who believed and were fearful.

16. And bear in mind the Day when the enemies of God will be gathered towards Hell; thus they shall be divided into categories.

17. See: Shah 'Abd al-Qādir, *Translation of al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Lahore: Tāj Company,

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The verse says that people should bear in mind when all these enemies of God shall be driven to and gathered around Hell and there they shall be categorized. Each of them shall enter Hell through the specific gate appointed for the particular category they belong to. It is evident from this that different types of criminals shall be treated differently in accordance with the nature of their deeds.

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا مَا جَآءُوْهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَاَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُوْدُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾[18]

The verse says that when all the criminals are gathered near Hell, it will not be difficult for the Almighty to adjudicate what type of criminal belongs to which section of Hell because on that day no one will be able to hide any of his deeds. The ears, eyes and even the hair on the skin of his body will bear witness to all his deeds.

The word جُلُوْدٌ occurs here in the capacity of a specific after the general. The special bearing of witness of the faculties of sight and hearing is evident because it is these faculties which make a person see and hear; however, there are other limbs of a person also through which he does virtuous or evil deeds. The word جُلُوْدٌ encompasses all of them. It is as if on that Day every hair of a person will become vocal to bear witness. This word occurs in the Qur'ān to connote hair of the skin. I have explained this usage under verse 33 of Sūrah al-Zumar.

وَقَالُوْا لِجُلُوْدِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدْتُّمْ عَلَيْنَا ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَنْطَقَنَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾[19]

After listening to the testimony of their limbs against them, these people will become hysterical and will censure them for this testimony. The limbs will answer that on that Day every thing has been given the faculty of speech; and He who has given this faculty of speech to everything has given them this faculty as well. It is evident from other places of the Qur'ān that on the Day of Judgement everything will narrate its story. The words in Sūrah al-Zilzāl are: اِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا. وَاَخْرَجَتِ الْاَرْضُ اَثْقَالَهَا. وَقَالَ الْاِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا. يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ اَخْبَارَهَا (٩٩:٤) (When the earth is shaken the way it ought to be shaken, and the earth casts forth its burdens and man cries out: "What is the matter with her?!" On that Day, she will narrate her story. (99:4))

It may be kept in mind that everything in the heavens and the earth is vocal in its testimony even today because everything is a sign of God and a conclusive witness to man of God's power, wisdom, mercy and providence. However, today only those

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n.d.), 791.

18. Until when they come near it, their ears, their eyes, and the very hair of their skin will testify to what they had been doing.

19. And they will say to their skins: "Why did you testify against us?" They will reply: "God, who gives speech to all things, has given us speech. And it was He Who created you the first time and now you are being returned to Him alone.

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people are hearing its evidence whose hearts are alive. Nevertheless, on the Day of Judgement, everyone will hear this testimony and everything will confirm this testimony because the impediments found today will be removed.

Though the words وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ could be part of the utterance of the جُلُود. However, in my opinion, it is co-ordinated to the actual discourse. The question posed to the جُلُود and its answer occurs as a parenthetical sentence within the actual discourse. What is actually said is that on that Day their ears, eyes and all other limbs will bear witness against these people. The purpose of presenting this testimony is that when all the limbs of a person will be given the faculty of speech to reveal all his secrets, how can the witness and intercession of any other being be beneficial to him? The witness of the claimant is sounder than a thousand witnesses. While co-ordinating to this, it is said: وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ implying that people should remember that it is God Who created you the first time and it is towards Him that they will be returned. If they think that their return would be to their alleged deities that they worship, then this is a false notion. How can they who have no say in creation and apportioning matters be the ones to whom people will return and be regarded as their Lords.

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُوْنَ اَنْ يَّشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَآ اَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُوْدُكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾[20]

Some exegetes have interpreted تَسْتَتِرُوْنَ as تَخَافُوْنَ. In their opinion, the meaning is: "You do not fear that your ears, eyes and other limbs will bear witness against you."[21] In my opinion, this interpretation is not correct. Here actually a specific style is adopted found in every language: the consequence of a thing is used to substantiate the thing itself. Obviously, if they had some fear they would have tried to hide from them when they were doing some evil deed; however, when they do not hide on this occasion, it only means that they never had any sort of fear from them.

The word لٰكِنْ in وَلٰكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ connotes the meaning of بَلْ (in fact). In other words, such was their foolishness that they thought that even God is not aware of many of their deeds, let alone evidence of the limbs.

وَ ذٰلِكُمْ ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِيْ ظَنَنْتُمْ بِرَبِّكُمْ اَرْدٰىكُمْ فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ مِّنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَاِنْ يَّصْبِرُوْا فَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَّهُمْ ۚ وَ اِنْ يَّسْتَعْتِبُوْا فَمَا هُمْ مِّنَ الْمُعْتَبِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾[22]

20. And you did not fear that your ears and your eyes and the hair of the skin of your bodies would testify against you. Moreover, you further thought that God does not know much of what you do.

21. See, for example: al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, 201 (*Translator*)

22. It is this estimation of yours about your Lord that doomed you and you ended up among

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Section III: Verses (25-36)

Initially, the fate of the leaders and followers of the disbelievers is depicted: today they have united to oppose the Qur'ān; however, when they face the consequences of this attitude the leaders and followers will become blood-thirsty enemies of one another. Such will be this animosity that the masses will request God to show them their leaders so that they can trample them below their feet.

After this, the fate of those people is depicted who in spite of all this uproar and tumult will remain steadfast on *tawḥīd*. The angels of God will come to them with glad tidings that their period of trial is over. The eternal kingdom of Paradise now awaits them.

In this context, the Prophet (sws) is sounded an assurance: he is the one who has brought the most blessed message. If his naïve opponents are not giving it due importance and instead of lending an ear to it are trying to disrupt it, he should patiently forgive this misdemeanour. This gracious behaviour from him will bring great benefit and blessings to his preaching endeavour.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَآءَ فَزَيَّنُوْا لَهُمْ مَّا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِيْٓ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ
الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَسْمَعُوْا لِهٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيْهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾
فَلَنُذِيْقَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ۙ وَّلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ اَسْوَاَ الَّذِيْ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ اَعْدَآءِ اللّٰهِ النَّارُ ۚ لَهُمْ
فِيْهَا دَارُ الْخُلْدِ ۭ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا رَبَّنَآ اَرِنَا الَّذَيْنِ اَضَلّٰنَا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ
نَجْعَلْهُمَا تَحْتَ اَقْدَامِنَا لِيَكُوْنَا مِنَ الْاَسْفَلِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوْا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةُ اَلَّا
تَخَافُوْا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوْا وَاَبْشِرُوْا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِيْ كُنْتُمْ تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ نَحْنُ اَوْلِيٰۗؤُكُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا
مَا تَشْتَهِيْٓ اَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَا تَدَّعُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ نُزُلًا مِّنْ غَفُوْرٍ رَّحِيْمٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَعَمِلَ
صَالِحًا وَّقَالَ اِنَّنِيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۭ اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِيْ بَيْنَكَ وَ
بَيْنَهٗ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهٗ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيْمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَمَا يُلَقّٰىهَآ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا ۚ وَمَا يُلَقّٰىهَآ اِلَّا ذُوْ حَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَاِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ

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the losers." Thus if they show patience, Hell is their abode and if they seek pardon, they shall not be granted pardon. (The author has not written any commentary on these verses – *Translator*)

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الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٦﴾

And We deputed on them evil companions; so they made everything from their past and present seem fair to them. At last, the declaration materialized for them the way it did for the bygone nations of jinn and men. They ended up among the losers. (25)

And the disbelievers said: "Pay no heed to this Qur'ān. Raise an uproar during its recital so that you may gain the upper hand." Thus We will sternly punish these disbelievers, and give them the worst of punishments for their misdeeds. This is the recompense of the enemies of God ie the Fire. This shall forever be their abode in retribution of denying Our revelations. (26-28)

And the disbelievers will say: "Lord! Show us the jinn and men who led us astray. We will trample them under our feet so that they are disgraced." (29)

Indeed, those who said: "Our Lord is God," and then remained steadfast on it, angels will descend to them, saying: "Have no fear, and do not grieve and accept the glad tidings of the Paradise you had been promised. We were your companions in the life of this world and are also your companions in the world to come. And you will find in this Paradise everything that your souls desire and you will find in it everything you ask for – as a means of hospitality from a forgiving and a merciful God." (30-32)

And who speaks better than he who calls men to God and does righteous deeds and says: "I am a Muslim?" Virtue and vice are not equal. Requite vice with virtue; so you will see that he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend. But none attain this wisdom except those who persevere and none attain this wisdom except those who are truly fortunate. And if Satan tries to lure your heart, seek God's refuge; indeed, it is He Who really sees and knows. (33-36)

Explanation

وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَآءَ فَزَيَّنُوْا لَهُمْ مَّا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِيْٓ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾[23]

The verse points to the fact that the dreadful fate met by these people was because they showed indifference to the reminder of God and instead of paying head to the teachings of His messenger did not give them due importance. As a result of this attitude, the Almighty chastised them by deputing on them evil leaders who totally deceived them until matters reached the point when the punishment of the Almighty promised to them visited them the way it visited earlier nations which had shown defiance.

23. And We deputed on them evil companions; so they made everything from their past and present seem fair to them. At last, the declaration materialized for them the way it did for the bygone nations of jinn and men. They ended up among the losers.

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The words وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَآءَ refer to the established practice of God mentioned in Sūrah al-Zukhruf in the following words: وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهٗ شَيْطٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهٗ قَرِيْنٌ. (٣٦:٤٣) (And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion, (43:36)). These devils are found both among the jinn and men. And when such devils are deputed on a nation because of forgetting God, they do not leave it until God's promised punishment comes upon it.

The words فَزَيَّنُوْا لَهُمْ مَّا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ imply that these devils highlight the past and present of these nations in such an embellished manner that they are not able to see any shortcoming in their deeds and character, beliefs and ideology. The purpose is to make these nations tread the path they want to make it tread in complete indifference to the reminders and admonition sounded to them by their prophets and the righteous among them.

The word الْقَوْلُ in وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ refers to the threat of God's punishment sounded by God to nations which rejected their respective messenger and which materialized for every nation which rejected their respective messenger. The punishment meted out to some of these nations has already been briefly mentioned in this *sūrah*.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَسْمَعُوْا لِهٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيْهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾[24]

Though the words الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا are general yet textual indications show that they refer to the leaders among disbelievers who reigned on the idolaters of Arabia and on whose attitude the previous verse comments. The verse says that to impede the call of the Qur'ān these people teach their ruffians that when they see Muḥammad (sws) reciting the Qur'ān to his people they should not listen to it and also not let others listen to it. On the contrary, they should hoot and yell at it to create discord and pandemonium so that Muḥammad's voice is subdued and their own voice is dominant.

فَلَنُذِيْقَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ۙ وَّلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ اَسْوَاَ الَّذِيْ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾[25]

The verse says that let these people do what they want; the Almighty will make them taste a painful torment, and bring before them the most horrible aspect of their deeds – something of which they too have no idea.

Here, it needs to be kept in mind that in this world man cannot fully asses the results of his deeds. Every deed of a person whether good or bad has the potential of affecting others. It is because of this characteristic of a deed that at times a small virtue multiplies and becomes as large as a mountain. Similarly, a vice which may seem very

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24. And the disbelievers said: "Pay no heed to this Qur'ān. Raise an uproar during its recital so that you may gain the upper hand."

25. Thus We will sternly punish these disbelievers, and give them the worst of punishments for their misdeeds.

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ordinary in its rudimentary stage can end up in great magnitude. When Cain killed his brother Abel, he actually laid the foundation of the crime of unjustified murder and after that whenever this kind of murder takes place it adds to the sin of Cain as he is partly responsible for it by initiating it. It is evident from this that when on the Day of Judgement each person will encounter the results of his deeds, only at that time will he be able to assess the extent of a certain sin he committed. It is to this aspect that the words وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ اَسْوَاَ الَّذِیْ كَانُوْا یَعْمَلُوْنَ of this verse point. In other words, at the moment these naïve people cannot assess how much sin they are accumulating for themselves by stopping people from the Qur'ān and by creating confusion in it. It is only when all the results come before them that they will be able to know the extent of loss they have inflicted on themselves.

ذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ اَعْدَآءِ اللّٰهِ النَّارُ ۚ لَهُمْ فِیْهَا دَارُ الْخُلْدِ ؕ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰیٰتِنَا یَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾[26]

The demonstrative pronoun ذٰلِكَ refers to the horrible fate they will encounter as referred to earlier. It is evident from textual indications that the expression اَعْدَآءِ اللّٰهِ alludes to the leaders of the Quraysh who through their rouges and ruffians were after subduing the call of the Qur'ān. The word النَّارُ signifies a complete sentence. In order to stress the enunciative (*khabar*) the inchoative (*mubatadā'*) has been suppressed. The implication is that this result will be encountered by people who today have become enemies of God and His religion, and it should be clearly understood that this result refers to Hell. In this fire will be the abodes of the leaders of disbelief where they will have to dwell forever. They will get this punishment because they persisted in denying the revelations of God; neither did they pay heed to them nor did they let others pay heed to them.

وَقَالَ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا رَبَّنَاۤ اَرِنَا الَّذَیْنِ اَضَلّٰنَا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ نَجْعَلْهُمَا تَحْتَ اَقْدَامِنَا لِیَكُوْنَا مِنَ الْاَسْفَلِیْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾[27]

Here too the words الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا are general yet it is evident from textual indications that they refer to the masses that were lured and led astray by their leaders. Neither did the leaders pay heed to the call of the Qur'ān nor did, as far as they could, let others pay heed to it. The verse implies that today these people are faithfully following their leaders. However, when they see the fate which their leaders will lead them to they will writhe with anger and request the Almighty to let them catch a glimpse of those among the men and jinn who led them astray so that they could trample them under

26. This is the recompense of the enemies of God ie the Fire. This shall forever be their abode in retribution of denying Our revelations.

27. And the disbelievers will say: "Lord! Show us the jinn and men who led us astray. We will trample them under our feet so that they are disgraced."

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their feet and as a result teach them a lesson for their arrogance and misuse of power and thereby pacify themselves.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوْا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَلَّا تَخَافُوْا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوْا وَاَبْشِرُوْا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِيْ كُنْتُمْ تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾[28]

After describing the fate of the opponents of the Prophet (sws) on the Day of Judgement, this verse describes the fate of those who accepted the preaching message of Muḥammad (sws) and then irrespective of all opposing forces adhered to it with full dedication and steadfastness. The verse says that on the Day of Judgement before the judgement is sounded angels will visit these people to please and comfort them; they will assure them that their time of trial is now over; they will tell them that neither is there any fear for them nor any sorrow; they should now accept the glad tidings of Paradise which had been promised to them through prophets and messengers.

نَحْنُ اَوْلِيٰٓؤُكُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيْٓ اَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَا تَدَّعُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[29]

The implication is that whereas devils were the companions of the disbelievers who at last led them to Hell, angels remained the companions of the believers in the previous world and in this one; the Paradise they will now be blessed with will have everything they desire and also things which they demand.

It may be kept in mind that the angels of God remain with the believers in this world also; they induce them towards virtue and also encourage and strengthen them in the hardships they face in this cause. A person is deprived of this help and encouragement from the angels when instead of valuing it he consigns his reins to Satan. I have written in detail on the help and companionship of the angels in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Anfāl.

نُزُلًا مِّنْ غَفُوْرٍ رَّحِيْمٍ ﴿٣٢﴾[30]

The word نُزُلٌ refers to the initial meal and feast given to a guest. The implication is that this attention and favour given to them constitutes the first act of hospitality. What they will be given later is only known to God.

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28. Indeed, those who said: "Our Lord is God," and then remained steadfast on it, angels will descend to them, saying: "Have no fear, and do not grieve and accept the glad tidings of the Paradise you had been promised.

29. We were your companions in the life of this world and are also your companions in the world to come. And you will find in this Paradise everything that your souls desire and you will find in it everything you ask for –.

30. As a means of hospitality from a forgiving and a merciful God."

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وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَّقَالَ اِنَّنِيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾[31]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and censures his opponents as well who would say: قُلُوْبُنَا فِيْٓ اَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَّمِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ.(٤١:٥) (Our hearts are obstructed from what you call us to and our ears are deaf from the things you tell us and there is a veil that stands between us and you, (41:5)). In other words, the Prophet (sws) is being told that if these people are not listening to him and in their frenzy of enmity have gone as far as asking people to not listen to the Qur'ān and create a noise and uproar when it is recited, then there is no need to go after them; it has become evident that all the fault lies with them; the Prophet (sws) or his message is not at fault; the message of the Prophet (sws) is that of *tawḥīd* of God and to worship Him. What can be a greater message that can be communicated to people. Besides this message, the Prophet (sws) himself is also an embodiment of righteousness and also calling others towards it. This is an irrefutable testimony of his genuineness and of the fact that he is not one who wants to create disorder in the land. His words and deeds are in perfect harmony with one another and that he wants to engender virtue and justice in the land. His words are: اِنَّنِيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ (I am from among the obedient people of my Lord). It is evident from these words that he is not after establishing his political dominance over people; in fact, he wants to make everyone obedient to God. This Islam is the nature of this universe and it is this religion towards which people were called by Abraham (sws) – the person whom these Ishmaelites associate themselves to. If even after these clear testimonies, these people are adamant on opposing him, then he should consign their matter to God. None except God can lift the covers that have enveloped their hearts.

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۭ اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِيْ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهٗ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهٗ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيْمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾[32]

This verse guides the Prophet (sws) and his companions to the behaviour they must adopt to counter the misbehaviour of his opponents. It is said that good and bad behaviour cannot be equal. There is a world of difference between the effect and consequences of both with regard to their fate in the Hereafter and the objective of preaching. Thus they must adopt that behaviour which is better to face the misdemeanour of these people. The benefit of this behaviour would be that those among their opponents who have some good left in them will become their bosom friends after being influenced by the sanity of their call and decency of their

31. And who speaks better than he who calls men to God and does righteous deeds and says: "I am a Muslim?"

32. Virtue and vice are not equal. Requite vice with virtue; so you will see that he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend.

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behaviour.

What is implied by showing good behaviour against the bad behaviour of the opponents is that though it is permitted to a person to exact an equal revenge for an excess committed against him, yet forgiveness and showing patience is even better. Thus in the sight of God it is better if the righteous adopt this attitude. This guidance is given to the believers in this very context at a number of places in the Qur'ān. I cite below one such verse from Sūrah al-Naḥl which aptly explains the verse under discussion:

اُدْعُ اِلٰى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَ الْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ وَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ. وَاِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبْتُمْ بِهٖ ؕ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّلصّٰبِرِيْنَ. (۱۶:۱۲۵-۱۲۶)

Call men to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation and debate with them in the most befitting manner. Indeed, your Lord best knows those who stray from His path and those who are rightly guided. And if you avenge, let this be commensurate with the wrong that has been inflicted upon you. And if you exercise patience, then this is the best way for the patient. (16:125-126)

It is evident from this that although a person has the right to exact revenge on the excesses committed against him by his opponents yet with regard to principles of preaching and reforming the attitude of forgiveness and patience is much better. For this reason, a believer is directed to adopt the attitude which is better.

It should remain in consideration that the believers are directed to adopt this behaviour until the truth is conclusively conveyed to their opponents. If the truth has been conclusively conveyed and in spite of this the opponents are adamant on their opposition and in fact are after destroying the righteous as well as their message, then after a clear declaration of acquittal they can also be taken to task. In this case, instead of forgiving them this would be the better course of action – and in some cases, the only course of action. Thus the very people of Makkah with whom the Almighty urged the Prophet (sws) and his companions to adopt the attitude of forgiveness mentioned in this verse faced the wrath of the companions at the behest of the Almighty after the truth had been conclusively conveyed to them. Details can be looked up in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Tawbah.

The words فَاِذَا الَّذِيْ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهٗ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهٗ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيْمٌ have been mentioned keeping in view the general nature of a person. When people whose nature has not been perverted see that so anxious is a person in wishing well for them that in spite of their bad behaviour and disrespect for him his graciousness towards them remains the same and in fact he responds to this bad behaviour with prayers for them, their attitude does change: even if because of some misunderstanding they have animosity for him they are deeply

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influenced by his magnanimous behaviour and their animosity gives way to love and affection and they become his bosom friends. Thus, it is an undeniable fact that the most effective factor in the preaching mission of Muḥammad (sws) was this aspect of his character. Whoever among his enemies had any trace of decency in them were greatly influenced by this aspect of his character and ultimately became his sincere companions and undaunted men of Islam. Only those heard-hearts were not affected by this attitude whose nature had been perverted.

وَمَا يُلَقّٰىهَآ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا ۚ وَمَا يُلَقّٰىهَآ اِلَّا ذُوْ حَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٣٥﴾[33]

The antecedent of the accusative pronoun هَا in يُلَقّٰىهَآ is not mentioned; it refers to the wisdom which the previous verse instructs Muslims to adopt. Bringing pronouns in this manner is very common in Arabic. I have already discussed this style while explaining the following verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَاِنَّهَا لَكَبِيْرَةٌ اِلَّا عَلَى الْخٰشِعِيْنَ. (٢:٤٥) The verse under discussion says that this wisdom can be attained only by those who have the trait of patience. Moreover, this wisdom is not something trivial; it is a profound treasure. Very fortunate are those who are able to acquire it.

Three things are evident from this explanation:

Firstly, what has been said earlier is a great piece of wisdom.

Secondly, only those people can attain this wisdom who have the trait of patience in them. Those who are devoid of patience, are not worthy of being given wisdom. For this reason, those who want to acquire it should deeply inculcate patience in them.

Thirdly, wisdom is not something trivial; it is an abiding treasure. So every man of grit should go all out in acquiring it. Very fortunate and privileged are those who succeed in this quest.

وَاِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٦﴾[34]

This is the remedy suggested if any sentiment adverse to wisdom arises in a person as a result of mischief played by the opponents and evil suggestions of Satan: he should seek God's refuge. If a person instead being lured away by his emotions sincerely seeks God's refuge, he will be definitely granted it by God, and Satan will not be able to get the better of him. It is God Who in reality hears and sees; nothing remains hidden from Him. When a person with full sincerity seeks God's help against Satan, He is necessarily helped by God.

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33. But none attain this wisdom except those who persevere and none attain this wisdom except those who are truly fortunate.

34. And if Satan tries to lure your heart, seek God's refuge; indeed, it is He Who really sees and knows.

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Section IV: Verses (37-46)

In the succeeding verses, the arguments which were presented in the beginning of the *sūrah* to substantiate the beliefs of *tawḥīd* and the Hereafter are further explained; these arguments had been drawn from the world around man. At the same time, people who have deviated from God's guidance and are also trying to de-track others are warned. They are also informed that the Qur'ān is a scripture revealed by God. Those who deny it will cause no harm to God; they will only hasten their own destruction. In this regard, it is also explained that by revealing the Qur'ān the Almighty has done a great favour to both the Ishmaelites and the Israelites. If they do not give it due regard and importance they will bear its evil consequences. The Almighty has conclusively conveyed the truth to them; hence whatever fate they face, they are worthy of it; they shall not face injustice.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهِ الَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ ؕ لَا تَسْجُدُوْا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَهُنَّ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِیَّاهُ
تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ فَاِنِ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا فَالَّذِیْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ یُسَبِّحُوْنَ لَهٗ بِالَّیْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا یَسْـَٔمُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾ وَمِنْ اٰیٰتِهٖۤ اَنَّكَ
تَرَى الْاَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَاِذَاۤ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَیْهَا الْمَآءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِیْۤ اَحْیَاهَا لَمُحْیِ الْمَوْتٰى ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ
﴿۳۹﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِیْنَ یُلْحِدُوْنَ فِیْۤ اٰیٰتِنَا لَا یَخْفَوْنَ عَلَیْنَا ؕ اَفَمَنْ یُّلْقٰى فِی النَّارِ خَیْرٌ اَمْ مَّنْ یَّاْتِیْۤ اٰمِنًا یَّوْمَ الْقِیٰمَةِ ؕ اِعْمَلُوْا مَا
شِئْتُمْ ۙ اِنَّهٗ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِیْرٌ ﴿۴۰﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَاِنَّهٗ لَكِتٰبٌ عَزِیْزٌ ﴿۴۱﴾ لَّا یَاْتِیْهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ
بَیْنِ یَدَیْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهٖ ؕ تَنْزِیْلٌ مِّنْ حَكِیْمٍ حَمِیْدٍ ﴿۴۲﴾ مَا یُقَالُ لَكَ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِیْلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ
مَغْفِرَةٍ وَّذُوْ عِقَابٍ اَلِیْمٍ ﴿۴۳﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا اَعْجَمِیًّا لَّقَالُوْا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ اٰیٰتُهٗ ؕ ءَاَعْجَمِیٌّ وَّعَرَبِیٌّ ؕ قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
هُدًى وَّشِفَآءٌ ؕ وَالَّذِیْنَ لَا یُؤْمِنُوْنَ فِیْۤ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَّهُوَ عَلَیْهِمْ عَمًى ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ یُنَادَوْنَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍۭ بَعِیْدٍ ﴿۴۴﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَیْنَا
مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِیْهِ ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِیَ بَیْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِیْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِیْبٍ ﴿۴۵﴾ مَنْ عَمِلَ
صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَیْهَا ؕ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِیْدِ ﴿۴۶﴾

And among His signs are the night and the day, and also the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate yourselves before the sun or the moon; rather prostrate yourselves before God, Who created all these things if you would truly worship Him. (37)

Thus if they show arrogance, [let them]; the angels who are with your Lord give glory only to Him night and day and they never get tired. (38)

And from among His signs is that you see the earth totally barren: but when We

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pour down rain upon it, it stirs and swells. Indeed, He who gives it life will raise the dead to life. Indeed, He has power over all things. (39)

Those who deviate from Our signs are not hidden from Our view. Is he who will be cast into the Fire better off than he who emerges in the shadow of peace on the Day of Judgement? Do what you want. He is fully watching all that you do. (40)

Those who denied the reminder of God when it came to them [have called for their doom]. It is indeed an exalted scripture. Falsehood cannot reach it from the front or from the back. It has been revealed in a profound manner from a wise and worthy of praise God. (41-42)

Nothing is being said to you that was not said to other prophets before you. Indeed, your Lord is greatly forgiving as well as very stern in retribution. (43)

And had We revealed the Qur'an in a foreign tongue, these people would have objected: "Why were not its verses expounded?" The discourse in a foreign tongue, and the addressees Arabs?" Say: "It is a guide and a cure for those who profess faith in it." As for those who are not professing faith, there is deafness in their ears and this is a like a covering for them. Now these people will be called from a far-off place. (44)

And We also gave the Book to Moses, but differences were created in it. And had a word from your Lord not been decreed earlier, the matter would have been decided between them and these people are in a confusing doubt from it. He who does good does it for his own soul; and he who commits evil will face its consequences and your Lord is never the slightest unjust to His servants. (45-46)

Explanation

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهِ الَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ ؕ لَا تَسْجُدُوْا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَهُنَّ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِیَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾[35]

In verses 9 to 12 of this *sūrah* arguments are drawn from the creation of the heavens and the earth on the doctrines of monotheism and the Hereafter. This verse relates to them. In between the motifs which are brought into discussion in order to sound warring, reminder and assurance relate to these doctrines. For this reason, no disjointedness or disconnection arises. Now, while referring to verses 9 to 12, it is said that among the signs of He Who is the creator of the heavens and the earth are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Their alternation and rising and setting bear witness to their subservience. From their very existence, they bear evidence that they are neither God nor His partners in any way; the truth is that the Almighty has fitted them as spare-parts in the machinery of this universe, and at His bidding are

35. And among His signs are the night and the day, and also the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate yourselves before the sun or the moon; rather prostrate yourselves before God, Who created all these things if you would truly worship Him.

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discharging the service assigned to them. After this testimony of theirs, it is mere foolishness and ignorance to regard them God or His partners. They are neither God nor His partners; they are actually the signs of God's power, wisdom, mercy and providence, and it is not just these who occupy the status of such signs; there are a number of such signs of which they are only a part.

The words لَا تَسْجُدُوْا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَهُنَّ express the consequence of what is just said: when they are neither God nor His partners but are only signs of God and have been made to serve man, then those who worship them not only belittle God but also their own selves. It is only God Who is worthy of being worshipped Who created everything including the day and the night and the sun and the moon and put them to man's service. The word prostration here connotes worship because it is the most prominent manifestation of worship. It is specially stressed that people should not worship the sun and the moon because idolatrous nations have worshipped them in every age. The pronoun in خَلَقَهُنَّ refers to all the objects mentioned earlier.

The words اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ express the fact that one can only fulfil the right of purely worshipping God if none except Him is prostrated to. Prostration is the greatest manifestation of worship. Hence it is not allowed before anyone except God. Here it needs to be kept in mind that if the idolaters of Arabia worshipped other things besides God, it was because they thought that these things are a means of procuring God's favour. In other words, worshipping them in their view was like worshipping god. These words refute this claim: God should be worshipped alone such that no one should even share the specific signs of this worship with anyone.

فَاِنِ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا فَالَّذِیْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ یُسَبِّحُوْنَ لَهٗ بِالَّیْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا یَسْـَٔمُوْنَ ۩[36]

This verse directs the Prophet (sws) to leave these people alone to themselves if because of arrogance they are not paying heed to him and haughtily remark that their ears are deaf to what he is saying and there is a curtain stretched between them and him. God has not the slightest concern for them; the Prophet (sws) too should show no concern for them. If these people do not worship God, it will not the slightest effect His court. The angels that are found in His presence are busy extolling Him day and night and such is their fervour for this that they never get tired. The words الَّذِیْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ connote the angels in their collective capacity; they do not refer to the ones who always remain in the presence of the Almighty. This is because the feature of the angels mentioned here belongs to all the angels. The words عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ (near your Lord) are meant to express the nearness the angels have with God with regard to man and jinn. The implication is that if these wretched people are showing indifference to

36. Thus if they show arrogance, [let them]; the angels who are with your Lord give glory only to Him night and day and they never get tired.

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worshipping the Almighty, let them do so; the noble and exalted creatures of God whom these people worship are the ones who do not feel any shame in worshipping God; they are busy extolling Him day and night and their enthusiasm and vigour for this does not diminish the slightest.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنَّكَ تَرَى الْاَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَاِذَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَآءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْٓ اَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۳۹﴾[37]

These verses express a reminder of the Hereafter – after the previous ones had expressed a reminder of monotheism. It is said that those who regard the Day of Judgement to be improbable should observe God's signs in this earth. One can see that at times the earth is totally dry, desolate and barren; God then out of His grace sends towards it clouds of mercy and in the blink of an eye it becomes brimming with life. Its low lying areas swell with greenery and vegetation and every nook and corner of it witnesses the spring of growth and luxuriance.

The words اِنَّ الَّذِيْٓ اَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى refer to the fact that the God Who continuously gives death and life to this earth is also definitely capable of raising back dead people to life. This is because God has power over all things: اِنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ. If He does not have this power, He cannot be God.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا لَا يَخْفَوْنَ عَلَيْنَا ؕ اَفَمَنْ يُّلْقٰى فِي النَّارِ خَيْرٌ اَمْ مَّنْ يَّاْتِيْٓ اٰمِنًا يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِعْمَلُوْا مَا شِئْتُمْ ۙ اِنَّهٗ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۴۰﴾[38]

The word اِلْحَادٌ means "to deviate" and "to swerve and stray." The expression يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا would mean that the verses and signs of God are guiding a person to some other direction. However, because of his ill-ways, stubbornness and divergence he adopts some other way and also tries to turn people towards this way.

Verse 25 has already referred to these evil efforts of the leaders who had swerved from the path of truth; it is such miscreants who are threatened in this verse. They are told that those who are working such evil are not beyond God's observation; He is watching and listening to everything. In other words, if these people are not hidden from God, then one day God will definitely make them taste the evil they were doing; this part of the discourse is left without any clarification; and the anger which is concealed in

37. And from among His signs is that you see the earth totally barren: but when We pour down rain upon it, it stirs and swells. Indeed, He who gives it life will raise the dead to life. Indeed, He has power over all things.

38. Those who deviate from Our signs are not hidden from Our view. Is he who will be cast into the Fire better off than he who emerges in the shadow of peace on the Day of Judgement? Do what you want. He is fully watching all that you do.

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this lack of clarification does not need any words for its explanation.

The words اَفَمَنْ يُّلْقٰى فِى النَّارِ خَيْرٌ اَمْ مَّنْ يَّاْتِىْٓ اٰمِنًا يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ provide this clarification in an interrogative style. The implication is that when the Almighty is watching all the deeds of people, then whatever attitude they adopt they should after deciding one question: will he who faces a fortunate fate be one who will be cast into Hell or one who rises on that Day such that he will have absolutely no fears? The natural consequence of God watching the deeds of people and having the power to re-create people is reward and punishment. Hence, whoever has to do anything in this world should first decide if his choice is Hell or Paradise? The paths to both these destinations are open to people. A person should adopt for himself the path he thinks is best for him. After delineating good and evil, the Almighty has left people with the discretion to choose between them.

The words اِعْمَلُوْا مَا شِئْتُمْ اِنَّهٗ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ express the liberty and freedom just referred to. After explaining good and evil as well as their consequences, the Almighty has given people the liberty to choose between them; however, whatever they are doing is being observed by Him. The warning found in these words is beyond expression.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَاِنَّهٗ لَكِتٰبٌ عَزِيْزٌ ۙ﴿۴۱﴾ لَّا يَاْتِيْهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهٖ ؕ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيْمٍ حَمِيْدٍ ﴿۴۲﴾ [39]

The word الذِّكْرِ refers to the Qur'ān. I have explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis why the Qur'ān is called thus. The subject discussed in the beginning of this *sūrah* is taken up afresh. It is said that people who are denying the Qur'ān after it has come to them, are … The answer to this is suppressed and there is great eloquence in this suppression. It is evident from this that in order to delineate their fate it is sufficient to merely mention their crime; there is no need to express it in words. They will see the same evil day which before them was witnessed by those who had rejected their respective messengers.

The words لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ after كَفَرُوْا بِالذِّكْرِ need special consideration. They are meant to express the gravity of their crime. If a person does not duly value something he has not seen and has not been able to evaluate, then he can be pardoned to some extent; however, he who denied the Qur'ān after he saw it, was also able to evaluate its inimitability and also had a good idea of the soundness of its arguments is like a person who is denying the brightness of the sun at the very time it is shinning over his head.

Two aspects need to be borne in mind regarding وَاِنَّهٗ لَكِتٰبٌ عَزِيْزٌ. One of them is the warning sounded and the other one is the purity of the Qur'ān. With regard to the first

39. Those who denied the reminder of God when it came to them [have called for their doom]. It is indeed an exalted scripture. Falsehood cannot reach it from the front or from the back. It has been revealed in a profound manner from a wise and worthy of praise God.

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of these aspects, this expression is related to the subject discussed previously, and with regard to the second of these aspects it is connected to the next verse.

The word عَزِيْزٌ means "powerful and dominant." With regard to this meaning, it sounds a warning. In other words, people who are denying the Qur'ān should be fully aware that this Qur'ān is not the request of an implorer; the fact is that its sender is عَزِيْزٌ ie. powerful and dominant, and this book itself is also عَزِيْزٌ. For this reason, its status is that it must be obeyed at all cost; those who deny it should fully keep in mind that this Book will decide their fate in this world. Here the established practice of God regarding His messengers should be kept in consideration which has been mentioned at many places in this exegesis.

Another meaning of the word عَزِيْزٌ is "inaccessible." The succeeding verse explains this word further. Here, this much should be kept in mind that however much an effort the devils from among men and jinn may make, they are not able to adulterate this Book in any way. Evil can neither enter in it from behind it nor from in front from it. The Almighty has totally protected it from every intervention of the devils. In other words, this forms an answer to the detestable practice of the opponents mentioned in the following words earlier:(٢٦:٤١) .وَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَسْمَعُوْا لِهٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ وَ الْغَوْا فِيْهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُوْنَ (And the disbelievers said: "Pay no heed to this Qur'ān. Raise an uproar during its recital so that you may gain the upper hand." (41:26))

Consider next the verse: لَا يَاْتِيْهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَ لَا مِنْ خَلْفِهٖ ؕ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيْمٍ حَمِيْدٍ. This is a comprehensive statement of the exaltedness and sublimity of the Qur'ān two aspects of which need special consideration:

Firstly, the Qur'ān is totally safe from in front of it and from behind it. The One Who has revealed it is God; the one who has brought it down is Gabriel and the one who has received it is Muḥammad (sws) and those who have acquired and transmitted are the most noble and righteous souls. It is as if from the beginning to the end it is perfection personified. There is not a single fissure in it through which Satan can intervene in it: neither in its origin nor in its end.

Secondly, the Almighty Himself has arranged for the protection of the Qur'ān as is evident from the words: (٩:١٥) .وَ اِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ. This is a distinction of the Qur'ān in which it is unparalleled with regard to all previous scriptures. The responsibility of protection of the Torah and the Injīl was imposed on their recipients who were not able to discharge this responsibility. The result was that great interpolations crept in these scriptures, and it became difficult to distinguish the right from the wrong in them. However, God Himself has taken up the responsibility of protecting the Qur'ān, and has safeguarded it from any addition till the Day of Judgement.

There are many aspects of this protection.

First, during the time of revelation of the Qur'ān the Almighty made arrangements that the devils are unable to interfere in the process of divine revelation in any way. Although there is a permanent arrangement to prevent the devils from eavesdropping

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and listening to divine matters we have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Jinn that during the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān, special arrangements were made in preventing devils from meddling in revelations in any way so that nothing is able to enter the Qur'an from in front of it (مِنۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ).

Second, the angel which the Almighty selected to reveal the Qur'ān has been called by the Qur'ān (81:20-21) as "the one endued with power, held in honour before the Lord of the Throne, obeyed in Heavens, moreover trustworthy." In other words, the angel is so powerful that evil spirits cannot overpower him; he is the head of all angels and he cannot forget anything. Whatever is entrusted to him by the Almighty, he fully protects. There is not a semblance of a chance that the slightest of change can take place in the revelation entrusted to him. He has a very high rank before the Almighty which shows that he is ahead of all other creatures as far as abilities are concerned – It is obvious that all this elaborate arrangement has been made to close the doors to any evil entering the Qur'ān from its very origin.

Third, the very person who was entrusted with the Qur'ān was firstly, the best of human beings in all respects and secondly, the responsibility of memorizing, arranging and safeguarding the Qur'ān was taken up by the Almighty: لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهٖ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهٖ.اِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهٗ وَ قُرْاٰنَهٗ.فَاِذَا قَرَاْنٰهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْاٰنَهٗ.ثُمَّ اِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهٗ (۷۵:۱۶-۱۹) (To acquire this Qur'ān [O Prophet!] Do not move your tongue hastily over it. Indeed, upon Us is its collection and recital. So when We have recited it, follow this recital [of Ours]. Then upon Us is to explain it [wherever need be], (75:16-19)). It is evident from various narratives that whatever text of the Qur'ān would be revealed the Prophet (sws) and his close Companions (rta) would memorize it. In every Ramaḍān, the Prophet (sws) would read it out to Gabriel or listen from him so that no possibility of any error or omission should remain and this reading out or listening to would be according to the sequence the Almighty had arranged it. Also evident from certain narratives is that in the last Ramaḍān of his life, this mutual presentation of the Qur'ān took place twice. Then in this very arrangement and recital the whole of the Qur'ān was written down and later the rightly guided caliphs sent its copies to various cities. This elaborate treatment was not received by any of the previous scriptures and about the Torah no one knows when its constituent scriptures were assembled and who was responsible for this task.

Fourth, the Qur'ān is a miracle with regard to its eloquent selection of words and the meanings they convey. And so distinct is it in this aspect to other discourses that they cannot match it. So much so, the words of the Prophet (sws) himself – who was the recipient of the Qur'ān and the most eloquent among everyone – could not rival it. Thus there is no possibility that any extraneous addition be made into it. Consequently, works of people who have dared to answer the challenge of the Qur'ān to bring something similar to it are preserved in history and literature. If a person compares them with the Qur'ān, he will notice the same difference between them as between a

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pearl and a pebble. In this manner, it is as if the doors to any adulteration from the rear too (مِنْ خَلْفِهٖ) have been closed.

Fifth, together with the promise of protecting the Qur'ān, the Almighty has also promised to protect and safeguard its language till the Day of Judgement. Because of the fact that the languages of some divine scriptures became extinct a lot of changes and interpolations were introduced by way of translations and we have no clue about them now. However, the real language of the Qur'ān is safe and sound and will remain so till the Day of Judgement. Hence there is no possibility of any evil creeping into it by way of translations and commentaries. If anyone tries to introduce some evil in it, men of learning can easily sift it out by testing it against the original text.

I have referred to just a few prominent aspects; there are some other aspects as well; however, this is an independent subject; it is not possible for me to go into more details here. From these aspects, readers can grasp how the Qur'ān possesses this majesty that evil cannot enter from behind it or from in front of it.

Consider next the part: تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيْمٍ حَمِيْدٍ. I have explained the word تَنْزِيْلٌ at a number of places in this exegesis that the meaning of thoroughness and gradual progression is found in it. Hence these words would mean that it is a book revealed in a thorough manner by the God who is Ḥakīm and Ḥamīd. These two are from among the attributes of God. The first of these attributes refers to the fact that He is a being every act and practice of whom has wisdom in it. Hence He has revealed this Book full of wisdom with great thoroughness. The second of these attributes refers to the fact that He is praiseworthy, has worthy attributes and is the fountainhead of all acts which are praiseworthy. Thus He has blessed His creatures with this great favour out of His grace and magnanimity. The previous verse refers to the attribute of 'Azīz which encompasses warning and threat in it. This verse refers to the attributes of Ḥakīm and Ḥamīd which encompasses exhortation in it.

مَا يُقَالُ لَكَ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِيْلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ مَغْفِرَةٍ وَّ ذُوْ عِقَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿۴۳﴾[40]

This verse sounds assurance to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws): he should not think that it is only his nation which has adopted such an attitude with him; in fact, whatever is being said to him was also said to the messengers of earlier nations by their respective miscreants. This is a common tradition of the messengers and their nations. In other words, it is not because of some shortcoming of the Prophet (sws) that the miscreants of his nation have become his enemies. This has always happened with the messengers of God. So just as other steadfast messengers showed perseverance on the harm inflicted on them by their nations, the Prophet (sws) should also show perseverance.

The words اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ مَغْفِرَةٍ وَّ ذُوْ عِقَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ imply that the Prophet (sws) should rest assured

40. Nothing is being said to you that was not said to other prophets before you. Indeed, your Lord is greatly forgiving as well as very stern in retribution.

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that there may be delay in the scheme of God but it does materialize: if in spite of the excesses committed by these people the Almighty has granted them respite, then this does not mean that there is no law of reward and punishment in His eyes. He is greatly forgiving and also inflicts a painful punishment. He gives respite till the very end so that those who are able to become worthy of forgiveness are provided with this opportunity. However, when people do not benefit from this opportunity or wrongly benefit from it, then He punishes them in such a painful way that it is not surpassed by anyone.

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا اَعْجَمِيًّا لَّقَالُوْا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ ؕ ءَاَعْجَمِيٌّ وَّعَرَبِيٌّ ؕ قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا هُدًى وَّشِفَآءٌ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَّهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿۴۴﴾[41]

Some of the excuses which the opponents would concoct to show indifference to the Qur'ān are cited in this verse and then their baselessness is shown. It is evident from contextual indications that these and some others were implanted by the Jews in the minds of the Ishmaelites to deprive them of the favour of the Qur'ān; however, being unaware of their jealousy and contrivances, the naïve leaders of the Quraysh would cite such objections suggested to them by the Jews merely because of their animosity for the Prophet (sws). A number of objections taught to them by the Jews and which they as a result had adopted have been mentioned in the previous *sūrahs* and in the succeeding *sūrahs* too they are taken up. One of these objections was that till that time the specific language of divine revelation had remained Hebrew – in which all the scriptures had been revealed which were regarded as divine by the Qur'ān. So why has the Almighty now changed His language and why is the new revelation now in Arabic?

The Qur'ān has answered this objection by saying that it is an objection for the sake of it and a mere excuse to oppose the Qur'ān. If this Qur'ān had been revealed in a non-Arabic tongue, these very people would have objected that why were not these verses fully explained to them in their own tongue. However, now that the Almighty has revealed it in Arabic and fully explained its verses, instead of showing gratitude to God for this favour and blessing they have taken up the objection implanted in their minds by their own enemies. They object that why has God violated His tradition by revealing this Book in Arabic. In other words, this great favour of the Almighty has become a reason for their objection!

The words ءَاَعْجَمِيٌّ وَّعَرَبِيٌّ are a part of their objection. Had it been revealed the way they wanted it to be they would have objected that the language is non-Arabic and the addressees are Arabs implying how inappropriate and ill-suited this arrangement is

41. And had We revealed the Qur'an in a foreign tongue, these people would have objected: "Why were not its verses expounded?" The discourse in a foreign tongue, and the addressees Arabs?" Say: "It is a guide and a cure for those who profess faith in it." As for those who are not professing faith, there is deafness in their ears and this is a like a covering for them. Now these people will be called from a far-off place.

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that those who are its foremost addressees are absolutely unaware of its language.

The words قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا هُدًى وَّ شِفَآءٌ express the fact that the Prophet (sws) should tell these people that this favour is for those who give due regard and importance to it. Those who do not want to believe in it will somehow find one way or the other to oppose it; however, those who have a desire for guidance in them and those who are aware of their intellectual and spiritual maladies will find guidance in it as well as the remedy of their sorrows.

The words وَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَّ هُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى delineate the fact that the reason that some people are not professing faith in this Book is not that there is some defect in this Book because of which it is not appealing to the hearts of these people. The truth is that the ears of their hearts are deaf and have lost the ability to accept the truth. For this reason the calls of the Qur'ān are not affecting their hearts and are in fact bouncing back from their ears.

The words وَ هُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى refer to the fact that the reason that some people are not being guided by this Book is not that it does not contain the light of guidance for them; the truth is that this light has dazed their eyes because of which instead of providing guidance it has become a means of their blindness. The implied meaning is that these people had made their eyes desirous of darkness instead of light; hence when divine light descended on them, their eyes could not withstand its brightness. In fact, whatever light that remained in them also went away. In order to fully appreciate this verse, readers are advised to study what I have written while explaining verse 20 of Sūrah al-Baqarah

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ allude to the fact that now they are being called from a nearby place: the messenger of God is ardently following them to deliver them the Book of God and His message. However, because of their arrogance they have turned a deaf ear to him; they hear nothing. Yet they must remember that soon a time will come when the summoner of the Day of Judgement will call them from a far off place, and they will run towards him as soon as they hear his call. They will dare not make any delay nor deviate from his call. In Sūrah Ṭāha, this subject is discussed in the following words: يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهٗ وَ خَشَعَتِ الْاَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ اِلَّا هَمْسًا.(۲۰:۱۰۸) (The day when they will run after the summoner; they will not be able to even slightly deviate from him; and the voices of all shall be humbled before the merciful Lord; hence you will hear nothing but whispers, (20:108)).

In order to fully understand the verse under discussion, readers may take another look at the explanation of the first five verses – in particular verse 5 of this *sūrah*: وَقَالُوْا قُلُوْبُنَا فِيْٓ اَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ وَ فِيْٓ اٰذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَّ مِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا وَ بَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ. The arrogant would conceitedly remark that their hearts are obstructed from the calls of the Prophet (sws) and that their ears are deaf and there is a barrier between them and the Prophet (sws). The Qur'ān has in fact corroborated each and every thing they have uttered and at the same time explained the nature of their deafness, blindness and barrier and on which day will these maladies of theirs be treated and the way this treatment will take place.

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وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ ﴿۴۵﴾[42]

This exact verse is also found in Sūrah Hūd (see: verse 111). I have already explained it there. This verse also answers an objection as the earlier verse did. The Jews would teach this objection to people that what is the need of a new Book when the Torah which is also God's Book is already present and the Qur'ān also acknowledges it as a Book from God? The Qur'ān has answered this question from various aspects which is cited in various *sūrahs*; here the answer given is that it is an established fact that the Almighty gave the Torah to Moses (sws). However, this is also an established fact that differences and discrepancies were created in it. The words فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ refer to discrepancies which are found in very blatant form in the various Books of the Torah. If there exists mere difference in interpretation in something, then this can be resolved by consulting the original text, parallels and precedence. However, when there exists an open discrepancy and contradiction in the original, then these differences cannot be resolved. Thus it is a fact that a single subject has been mentioned in the various portions of the Torah in so many contradictory ways that it becomes difficult in fact impossible to reach the actual. I have cited many examples of these contradictions in the Torah in this exegesis. Here I will just allude to one of these contradictions: the ones found regarding the predictions of the advent of Muḥammad (sws). Had the Jews not created these contradictions by interpolations in the Torah, they would have very easily understood why the Almighty revealed the Qur'ān after the Torah and after Moses (sws) what was the void in religion that needed to be fulfilled that necessitated the advent of Muḥammad (sws). But the Jews out of their wretchedness tried to hide this reality and in this manner they not only led themselves astray but were also instrumental in leading many others astray.

I have already alluded to earlier that these contradictions arose in the Torah because unlike the Qur'ān it was not divinely preserved. Many a time calamities befell it and the whole of the Torah became extinct. Later those who re-compiled it, did so merely from their memory. It is also not known who these compilers were and what were their traits. Some of the Books of the Torah were kept in total secrecy; no one except a select few knew their contents because they contained things which Jewish scholars did not like others to read because of their vested interest. Such things were even altered by them and they were successful too in this alteration. The creation of contradictions in such a Book is not amazing at all and the obvious result of these contradictions is that the truth is totally lost and the people are once again are engulfed in the darkness – the very darkness to take people out from which divine light was

42. And We also gave the Book to Moses, but differences were created in it. And had for a word from your Lord not been decreed earlier, the matter would have been decided between them and these people are in a confusing doubt from it.

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revealed – and such differences are created between people that there is no means left to resolve them.

The words وَ لَوۡ لَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتۡ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِیَ بَیۡنَهُمۡ are a very severe threat and since this objection, as alluded to earlier, was taught by the Jews, the words of this threat are sounded by referring to these Jews. The implied meaning is that the Jews even now regard themselves to be the recipients of the Torah and conceitedly think that the religious and political leadership they had acquired because of the Torah still lies with them and no one can challenge it. The fact is that because of their injustice to the Book of God they deserve that the court of God decide their fate by punishing them but the Almighty has fixed a day for deciding the date of each nation. For this reason, they have been granted respite. However, this respite nevertheless is a respite which will end one day and they will taste the punishment of this oppression.

The words وَ اِنَّهُمۡ لَفِیۡ شَكٍّ مِّنۡهُ مُرِیۡبٍ refer to the consequence of the differences and discrepancies created in the Torah. Obviously, the result was that everything written in the Torah became doubtful in the eyes of its recipients and because of this it became impossible to distinguish between good and evil. Several sects were born among them. Each sect adopted whatever it considered in accordance to its desire and the real religion was lost in these discrepancies. In the opinion of Imām Rāzī the antecedent of the pronoun in مِّنۡهُ is the Qur'ān.[43] However, in my opinion, it is the Torah and the aspect from which it became doubtful is the one just discussed.

This subject will be discussed in Sūrah Shūrā ahead. There some of its concise aspects will be further explained. In Sūrah Shūrā, this subject is discussed thus:

وَ مَا تَفَرَّقُوۡۤا اِلَّا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الۡعِلۡمُ بَغۡیًۢا بَیۡنَهُمۡ ؕ وَ لَوۡلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتۡ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰۤی اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّی لَّقُضِیَ بَیۡنَهُمۡ ؕ وَ اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ اُوۡرِثُوا الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ لَفِیۡ شَكٍّ مِّنۡهُ مُرِیۡبٍ. (۴۲:۱۴)

And these people divided themselves merely because of mutual obduracy only after true knowledge had come to them. And had not a thing been ascertained by God till an appointed term, He would have immediately decided among them. And those who have been made the inheritors of the Book after them are inflicted with a baffling doubt. (42:14)

مَنۡ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفۡسِهٖ ۚ وَ مَنۡ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَیۡهَا ؕ وَ مَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلۡعَبِیۡدِ ﴿۴۶﴾[44]

This is an expression of indifference to people: neither is the piety of a person of any benefit to God nor can any sin of a person harm him. He who does a pious deed

43. Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 1st ed., vol. 27 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 2000), 116.

44. He who does good does it for his own soul; and he who commits evil will face its consequences and your Lord is never the slightest unjust to His servants.

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will only himself benefit from it and he who does an evil deed will alone face its consequences. God is not unjust to His people in the slightest way. He will bring forth the results of their deeds in accordance with the nature of these deeds. In other words, the immense effort and enthusiasm on the part of God and His Prophet to show the right path to the people should not be a cause of deception for anyone; they should not think that God is not able to accomplish some of His tasks until people are rightly guided. The fact is that all this enthusiasm and vigour is for the betterment of the people. God does not want that people be seized by Him if the truth has not been conclusively conveyed to them. In verse 15 of Sūrah al-Jāthiyah as well this subject is discussed in the same context.

I have already explained this principle of the Arabic language that when there is a negation of an exaggeration, then its purpose is to create exaggeration in the negation itself. For this reason the expression would mean: "You Lord is not unjust to his people in the slightest sense."

Section V: Verses (47-54)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. In them, first those people are warned who had no fear for the looming punishment or for the Day of Judgement because they were not being informed of the exact time of its arrival. They are told that denying a fact merely because its time of arrival cannot be divulged is no prudence. There are so many near at hand realities which no sane person merely denies because its time of advent is not known to anyone.

After this, sorrow is expressed at people who were asking to hasten the time of arrival of the promised punishment; such is the meanness of these people that though God out of His grace has given them respite to repent and mend their ways, they think that this is mere bluff; they are demanding the punishment to visit them; whereas if they are seized now by God in any way they will not get tired of making long invocations and pleadings.

In the end, these people are warned of the heinous fate of denying the Qur'ān. They are also told that if the various arguments proffered to substantiate its veracity are not enough, then soon signs of its veracity will appear in the world around them and in that within them which no one will dare negate.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اِلَيْهِ يُرَدُّ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ۭ وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْ ثَمَرٰتٍ مِّنْ اَكْمَامِهَا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ اُنْثٰى وَلَا تَضَعُ اِلَّا بِعِلْمِهٖ ۭ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيْهِمْ
اَيْنَ شُرَكَاۗءِيْ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اٰذَنّٰكَ ۙ مَا مِنَّا مِنْ شَهِيْدٍ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَظَنُّوْا مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّحِيْصٍ

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﴿٤٨﴾ لَا يَسْـَٔمُ الْاِنْسَانُ مِنْ دُعَآءِ الْخَيْرِ ۫ وَاِنْ مَّسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيَـُٔوْسٌ قَنُوْطٌ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَلَئِنْ اَذَقْنٰهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ضَرَّآءَ
مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ هٰذَا لِيْ ۙ وَمَآ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً ۙ وَّلَئِنْ رُّجِعْتُ اِلٰى رَبِّيْٓ اِنَّ لِيْ عِنْدَهٗ لَلْحُسْنٰى ۚ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ۬ وَلَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَاِذَآ اَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْاِنْسَانِ اَعْرَضَ وَنَاٰ بِجَانِبِهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُوْ
دُعَآءٍ عَرِيْضٍ ﴿٥١﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ كَفَرْتُمْ بِهٖ مَنْ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ هُوَ فِيْ شِقَاقٍۭ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٥٢﴾ سَنُرِيْهِمْ
اٰيٰتِنَا فِي الْاٰفَاقِ وَفِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ ۭ اَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ اَنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ فِيْ
مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآءِ رَبِّهِمْ ۭ اَلَآ اِنَّهٗ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيْطٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

And God alone has knowledge of the Hour of Doom. No fruit comes out of its shell and no female conceives or gives birth, but with His knowledge. And the day He will call out to them: "Where are those fellow-gods of Mine?" They will reply: "We have submitted to you that none of us can bear testimony to this." And the idols which they invoked earlier will vanish from them and they shall learn that there is no escape. (47-48)

And man never gets tired of praying for good things. But when some calamity befalls him, he loses hope and grows despondent. And if after he has been afflicted with a calamity We make him taste Our mercy, he says: "This is my right and I do not think the Hour of Doom will ever come. And ever if am returned to my Lord, He will surely reward me well." Thus We shall definitely inform disbelievers of their deeds and make them taste a grievous scourge. (49-50)

And when We show favour to man, he turns his back and holds aloof; but when some harm befalls him he starts offering long pleadings. (51)

Tell them: "Speak up, if this Qur'an is from God and you deny it, then who can err more than the person who has gone far in opposition?" (52)

We will show them Our signs in the world all around them and [that] in them until they clearly see that this Qur'ān is the truth. And does it not suffice that your Lord is the witness of all things? Beware these people doubt that they will ever meet their Lord. Beware, He encompasses all things. (53-54)

Explanation

اِلَيْهِ يُرَدُّ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ۭ وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْ ثَمَرٰتٍ مِّنْ اَكْمَامِهَا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ اُنْثٰى وَلَا تَضَعُ اِلَّا بِعِلْمِهٖ ۭ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيْهِمْ
اَيْنَ شُرَكَاۗءِيْ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اٰذَنّٰكَ ۙ مَا مِنَّا مِنْ شَهِيْدٍ ﴿٤٧﴾[45]

This verse answers the objection of people who in response to the warnings of the

45. And God alone has knowledge of the Hour of Doom. No fruit comes out of its shell and no female conceives or gives birth, but with His knowledge. And the day He will call out to them: "Where are those fellow-gods of Mine?" They will reply: "We have submitted to you that none of us can bear testimony to this."

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Hereafter sounded to them would mockingly say: "When will it come? Why is it not coming if it is supposed to come? When will this ship which has set sail come to port?" Such people who make fun of these warnings are answered at various places in the Qur'ān by informing them that the advent of the Hereafter is a certainty. It is an obvious consequence of this universe and the attribute of its Creator. The world within man and that outside him bear witness to it; hence it shall definitely come; as far as the question about the exact time of its arrival is concerned, this is known to God only. He alone has knowledge of this; no other person is aware of this secret.

The words وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْ ثَمَرٰتٍ مِّنْ اَكْمَامِهَا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ اُنْثٰى وَلَا تَضَعُ اِلَّا بِعِلْمِهٖ refer to the fact that it is not only this secret which is known only to God, there are many near at hand facts known to Him alone. Man's knowledge regarding them is very limited but in spite of this no sane person denies them. A spike of wheat sprouts; no one knows whether it will grow and become ripe and if it will how many of its seeds will be defective and how many of them will be without defect; how many of them will remain protected; what exactly is the date when they will become ripe and how many of them will ultimately come in the possession of the farmer and how many of them will be devoured away by animals and birds. All these facts are known to God alone. Hence if man is not aware of the exact time of arrival of the Hereafter, then this is nothing strange. The Hereafter is a great happening; man does not have exact knowledge of many things which he observes everyday.

The expression وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ اُنْثٰى alludes to the fact that no one knows if a pregnant lady will deliver a boy or a girl; whether the delivered offspring would be a normal human being or would have some handicap; whether the offspring will be born alive or born dead and what would be the date and time of this delivery? The exact knowledge of all these things is known to God alone. If man has such limited knowledge of such a common phenomenon, then how is it strange that if he does not have knowledge of the time of arrival of the Day of Judgement or if he is not informed about it? However, if he could have claimed that he does have knowledge of all the rest of the things and it is only this particular thing which he has no knowledge of, it would have been perfectly right for him to doubt or deny it on this basis. This topic is discussed at another place in the following words:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ۚ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ ۚ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْاَرْحَامِ ۭ وَمَا تَدْرِيْ نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا ۭ وَمَا تَدْرِيْ نَفْسٌۢ بِاَيِّ اَرْضٍ تَمُوْتُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ. (٣١:٢٤)

Indeed with God alone is the knowledge of the Hour. And it is He Who sends down rain, and knows whatever is in the wombs. And no soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no one knows in what land he will die. Indeed, God alone is the All-Knower, All-Aware. (31:24)

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The words وَ يَوْمَ يُنَادِيْهِمْ اَيْنَ شُرَكَآءِىْ قَالُوْٓا اٰذَنّٰكَ مَا مِنَّا مِنْ شَهِيْدٍ imply that if these people are showing indifference to the Hereafter on the basis of their alleged deities, then they should remember that when on that Day the Almighty will ask them to call forth their deities to save them from His grasp they will confess that these deities are not partners of God. In the previous *sūrah*, this subject was discussed in the following words:

ثُمَّ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُوْنَ. مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالُوْا ضَلُّوْا عَنَّا بَلْ لَّمْ نَكُنْ نَّدْعُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ. (٤٠: ٧٣-٧٤)

Then they will be asked: "Where are those whom you associated with God?" They will reply: "They have forsaken us; in fact, we have never been worshipping anything." In this way, God will make the disbelievers lose their senses. (40:73-74)

The implication is that at the very first call to bring forth their deities, these people will come out of their inebriation and confess their mistake.

Some people regard the words اٰذَنّٰكَ مَا مِنَّا مِنْ شَهِيْدٍ (We say to you that none of us is a witness to this) to be a statement from their alleged deities. This would mean that when the Almighty will demand from the idolaters to bring forth the deities they associated with God, then the prophets or angels whom they worshipped would take the initiative in absolving themselves by saying that none of them is prepared to become a witness that anyone is God's partner. This interpretation is perhaps adopted on the basis of the following verse:

وَ يَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَ مَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَيَقُوْلُ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَضْلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِىْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيْلَ. قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْۢبَغِىْ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُوْنِكَ مِنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ وَ لٰكِنْ مَّتَّعْتَهُمْ وَ اٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ ۚ وَ كَانُوْا قَوْمًۢا بُوْرًا. (٢٥: ١٧-١٨)

And on the Day when God will gather them together with those whom they had been worshipping besides Him. Thus He will ask them: "Was it you who misled these servants of Mine or did they themselves strayed in error?" They will reply: "Glory be to You! We had no right to make anyone as Protector besides You, but what happened was that You gave them and their fore-fathers worldly comfort till they forgot Your reminder and became doomed." (25:17-18)

If the first interpretation is adopted, then the word اٰذَنّٰكَ is tantamount to a declaration of acquittal. In other words, it would be a blatant confession of their sin by the idolaters and an expression of seeking God's mercy to forgive them.

If the second interpretation is adopted, then the meaning of the verse would be that

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in response to what God said to them they would reply what is stated in the above quoted verses of Sūrah al-Furqān (25:17-18). However, when these idolaters who worshiped these deities would be asked from God to bring forth these associates they had set up with God, these deities thinking they are being called will give reference to what they would have said before and which is cited in the quoted verses of Sūrah al-Furqān (25:17-18).

وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَظَنُّوْا مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّحِيْصٍ ﴿٤٨﴾[46]

Whether the worshippers will make a proclamation of acquittal from their deities or vice versa, in both cases the idolaters are set to be doomed. This is because those on whose basis they had shown indifference to the Hereafter will not be there to save them. They would then be certain that they cannot escape God's punishment.

I have already explained the word ظَنٌّ at an appropriate place in this exegesis. I have attempted to explain there that this word connotes certainty at instances in which the purpose is to state a fact of the future which cannot be observed yet it is a certain fact in the opinion of the speaker. An example of this can be seen in the following verse: اِنِّيْ ظَنَنْتُ اَنِّيْ مُلٰقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ . (٢٠:٦٩) (I was certain that I shall have to face my reckoning, (69:20)).

لَا يَسْـَٔمُ الْاِنْسَانُ مِنْ دُعَآءِ الْخَيْرِ ۫ وَاِنْ مَّسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيَئُوْسٌ قَنُوْطٌ ﴿٤٩﴾[47]

Though a general word انْسَانٌ (man) is used, it refers to the disbelievers who were asking the Prophet (sws) to hasten the arrival of the Day of Judgement. They would mockingly inquire about the delay in its coming if it is certain to come. Instead of addressing them or giving their explicit reference what is said is said in a general way so that aversion is also expressed to them and what is said assumes the form of a principle.

The verse says that man is a strange creature: if he is blessed with affluence and riches, then instead of being grateful he challenges God and asks Him to hasten the punishment; if he is even slightly seized by God, he starts making long invocations to be shown mercy and pledges that if he is relieved of his suffering he will become eternally grateful to God and become His obedient servant. However, this is mere deception on his part for as soon as God delivers him from his suffering he fully reverts to his original state of ingratitude. If God does not relieve him of his troubles or if his hardships prolong, then instead of being content on the verdict of God and being patient he starts to despair and loses hope in God.

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46. And the idols which they invoked earlier will vanish from them and they shall learn that there is no escape.

47. And man never gets tired of praying for good things. But when some calamity befalls him, he loses hope and grows despondent.

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Generally people have interpreted this verse to mean that such people very enthusiastically supplicate before God to grant them worldly success and progress. To them, the expression دُعَآءِ الْخَيْرِ refers to supplicating for worldly successes. However this is against general observation and practice. Such people never turn to God if they are sailing smoothly in life. In fact, they are engrossed in their objectives and infatuated with their own desires. However, when they are faced with hardships, they turn to God and start making long invocations to Him and also request others to plead before God for them. If their affliction ends, they forget God and regard this to be a result of their own planning or of their own good fortune. If the affliction extends a little, they end up in frustration and feel defeated.

This subject is discussed in the Qur'ān at various places. For example, in Sūrah al-Luqman, the words are:

وَاِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَّوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىهُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ ۭ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ. (۳۱:۳۲)

And when waves like canopies cover them, they invoke God pledging their pure obedience to Him alone. So when He brings them safe to land, there are few among them who stop in the middle, [and many who break their promises]. But none denies Our signs except every perfidious ungrateful. (31:32)

In Sūrah Yūnus, the words are:

وَاِذَا مَسَّ الْاِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنْۢبِهٖٓ اَوْ قَاعِدًا اَوْ قَاۗىِٕمًا ۚ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهٗ مَرَّ كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَدْعُنَآ اِلٰى ضُرٍّ مَّسَّهٗ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ. (۱۰:۱۲)

And when man is afflicted with some sorrow, he invokes Us, lying down or sitting or standing. But as soon as We take away this sorrow he walks away as if he had never invoked Us for a remedy to any sorrow of his. (10:12)

At another place in Sūrah Yūnus, it is similarly said:

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ ۚ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِمْ بِرِيْحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَّفَرِحُوْا بِهَا جَاۗءَتْهَا رِيْحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَّجَاۗءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَّظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ اُحِيْطَ بِهِمْ ۙ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ لَىِٕنْ اَنْجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هٰذِهٖ لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ. فَلَمَّآ اَنْجٰىهُمْ اِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ. (۱۰:۲۲-۲۳)

He it is Who enables you to travel through land and sea, till when you are in the ships and they sail with them with a favourable wind, and they are engrossed therein, then comes a stormy wind from some direction and the waves come to

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them from all sides, and they think that they shall be killed, they invoke Allah, promising their obedience, saying: "If You deliver us from this destruction, we shall truly become grateful to you." But when He delivered them, they spread anarchy in the land without any basis. (10:22-23)

In the light of these parallel verses, the verse under discussion in my opinion would mean that when such people are afflicted with some trial, they never get tired of beseeching God. Thus verse 51 ahead also explains this: وَ اِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُوْ دُعَآءٍ عَرِيْضٍ. (٤١:٥١) (and when some sorrow befalls them, he takes to long invocations, (41:51)).

The words وَاِنْ مَّسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيَئُوْسٌ قَنُوْطٌ imply that in the first phase of his suffering he goes about making long pleadings before God, but when he sees that his pleadings are not producing results, he ends up frustrated and discouraged after losing hope in God's mercy.

The implication is that such people forget God when they are in comfort and ease and remember Him only when they are in distress; in this situation too, as soon as they are relieved of their distress they forget God once again and if it does not seem to go away they lose hope in Him. Both these cases reflect disbelief and ingratitude. The character of a true God-fearing person is that in case of comfort and ease he is grateful to God, and when some trial comes his way he faces it with patience and is desirous of God's mercy. In other words, he is a person who neither becomes conceited because of being blessed with ease and comfort nor becomes dejected, desperate and gloomy in hardships. On the contrary, he is pleased and satisfied with God's decisions. This is the real majesty of faith and trust in God and it is such people who acquire a contented soul and a state in which God is pleased with them and they with God.

وَلَئِنْ اَذَقْنٰهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ضَرَّآءَ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ هٰذَا لِيْ ۙ وَمَآ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً ۙ وَّلَئِنْ رُّجِعْتُ اِلٰى رَبِّيْٓ اِنَّ لِيْ عِنْدَهٗ لَلْحُسْنٰى ۚ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ۡ وَلَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ ﴿۵۰﴾[48]

The verse implies that if he is not delivered from the suffering he had prayed to be rid of he loses hope in God's mercy as is indicated in the previous verse. But if the Almighty blesses him with His grace and alleviates his suffering, then instead of being grateful to God he conceitedly thinks that this was his right; that he has been created with such high status and would live his life in this manner; no one can deprive him of this nor is there any need for him to be thankful to anyone for this He further contends that as for the Day of Judgement about which some people are warning him of, in the first place, it is quite improbable that it will come; however, if it does come and he has

48. And if after he has been afflicted with a calamity We make him taste Our mercy, he says: "This is my right and I do not think the Hour of Doom will ever come. And ever if am returned to my Lord, He will surely reward me well." Thus We shall definitely inform disbelievers of their deeds and make them taste a grievous scourge.

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to face God, then he will be granted a high status there and will enjoy luxuries and comforts there as well just as he did in the previous world.

It needs to be kept in consideration that it is not necessary that all these statements be made by such people with their tongue (even though many of them say so with shameful courage); it is enough that such thoughts exist in the minds. The Qur'ān has called even these mental thoughts as قول (statement) because one's attitude best reflects one's inner-self.

The words فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِمَا عَمِلُوْا وَلَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ very sternly warn these people who were living in a fool's paradise. The implication is that these foolish people are dreaming that just as they are blessed with abiding comfort and luxury in this world, they will have this in the next world as well if ever it comes; they should bear in mind that the next world is bound to come and that the Almighty will definitely inform these disbelievers of their deeds. Informing them of their deeds in other words means that they will be visited by a grievous punishment – as is explained by the last words: وَلَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ (We shall make them taste a grievous punishment).

وَاِذَآ اَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْاِنْسَانِ اَعْرَضَ وَنَاٰ بِجَانِبِهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُوْ دُعَآءٍ عَرِيْضٍ ﴿٥١﴾[49]

The expression نَاٰ بِجَانِبِهٖ imply what is implied at other instances by idioms such as فَتَوَلّٰى بِرُكْنِهٖ (٣٩:٥١) and ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهٖ (٩:٢٢). It signifies arrogantly turning away. The word جَانِبٌ means "side." When a person arrogantly turns away, he bends his shoulders and turns his side and walks away. The expression نَاٰ بِجَانِبِهٖ portrays this scene.

In the previous verse, one aspect of the character of such people (allusion is to the Quraysh and the arrogant leaders of Ṭā'if) is depicted. In this verse, another aspect of their character is referred to. It is said that when the Almighty blesses them with some favour they turn away from Him and walk away arrogantly; however, if He even slightly takes them to task, they start making long invocations. In other words, there is no basis of their arrogance. In one instance, they deviate from the right path and at another start to complain and whine.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ كَفَرْتُمْ بِهٖ مَنْ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ هُوَ فِيْ شِقَاقٍ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٥٢﴾[50]

This verse poses a question to these rejecters who were arrogantly denying the Qur'ān by hypothetically accepting their view: where will they go if this Book is from God? In this case, who will have strayed more in error than those who have gone far

49. And when We show favour to man, he turns his back and holds aloof; but when some harm befalls him he starts offering long pleadings.

50. Tell them: "Speak up, if this Qur'an is from God and you deny it, then who can err more than the person who has gone far in opposition?"

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in their animosity and reached their place of doom – a place from which they cannot even return.

This verse actually invites these people to reflect with full sincerity on the Qur'ān and giving due importance to it before they form any opinion about it. The basis of this invitation is that the fate the Qur'ān is warning its rejecters and the arguments it is informing them of are not something that should be summarily dismissed or made fun of; in fact, through very convincing arguments it is informing them of a dreadful fate. Therefore, people who are obdurately rejecting it should not ignore the possibility of the veracity of its claim. If they think that there is such a possibility – and the most stubborn of people cannot negate this possibility – then prudence and far-sightedness demands that they reflect on the Qur'ān a hundred times and whatever decision they make, they should consider its far-off repercussions. If they adopt the Qur'ān, they will lose nothing. In fact, they will gain and gain everything. However, if in frenzy of their stubbornness and enmity they reject it, then this enmity will take them and throw them in a place from which no possibility of any return will remain. In other words, they should give this matter the importance it deserves. If they allow obduracy and self-centredness and jealousy and animosity to play their role, then this tussle will lead them to a grievous doom.

سَنُرِيۡهِمۡ اٰيٰتِنَا فِى الۡاٰفَاقِ وَفِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمۡ اَنَّهُ الۡحَـقُّ ؕ اَوَلَمۡ يَكۡفِ بِرَبِّكَ اَنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدٌ ؕ﴿۵۳﴾[51]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and warning to the rejecters of the Qur'ān. The implication is that if these people are not willing to accept the Qur'ān on the basis of arguments and are adamant to observe the signs of God as a proof of the Qur'ān's veracity, then very soon the time will come when such signs will appear in Makkah and its whereabouts and in the Quraysh themselves that these people will cry out that the Qur'ān is an absolute truth.

The word "signs" in the opinion of this writer refers to the signs of dominance of the truth and of the destruction of falsehood predicted by the Qur'ān. This prediction is also mentioned earlier in this *sūrah* in the light of historical arguments. Initially, the leaders of the Quraysh regarded these to be tall claims of self-praise and made fun of them. However, when in Madīnah and in Makkah itself and its whereabouts and even among the noble souls of the Quraysh Islam started to take root, they and their supporters started to realize the truthfulness of these claims. Finally, after migration such incidents of Islam's dominance ensued as caused the empires of Rome and Persia to submit to it, let alone the Quraysh. This subject is also discussed in Sūrah al-Naml in the following words: سَيُرِيۡكُمۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ فَتَعۡرِفُوۡنَهَا ؕ (۹۳:۲۷) (and He will show you His signs;

51. We will show them Our signs in the world all around them and [that] in them until they clearly see that this Qur'ān is the truth. And does it not suffice that your Lord is the witness of all things?

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thus you will recognize them, (27:93)).

The words اَوَلَمۡ يَكۡفِ بِرَبِّكَ اَنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدٌ refer to the fact that though the glad tidings of the truth being delivered to them relate to the future, their Lord is aware of the past, the present and the future; hence they should rest assured that every one of these glad tidings will materialize.

اَلَاۤ اِنَّهُمۡ فِىۡ مِرۡيَةٍ مِّنۡ لِّقَآءِ رَبِّهِمۡ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّهٗ بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ مُّحِيۡطٌ ﴿۵۴﴾[52]

Here, at the end, the actual cause of spreading disorder by these rivals is referred to: their real malady is that they have doubts about being raised to life again and facing their Lord. This attitude has made them short-sighted in the matters of life and also very stern in their opposition to the truth. The Prophet (sws) is asked to fully inform them that God embraces everything. Nothing is beyond His jurisdiction. He will do whatever He wants and whenever He intends. Neither can anyone escape from His grasp nor can anyone become an impediment for Him to realize any of His intentions.

By the grace of God, with these lines the exegesis of this *sūrah* stands completed. فَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (so gratitude be to God on this).

Raḥmānābād
24th October 1975 AD
8th Shawwal 1395 AH

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52. Beware these people doubt that they will ever meet their Lord. Beware, He encompasses all things.

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Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Sūrah Shūrā (42)

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Sūrah Shūrā

Central Theme and Period of Revelation

The central theme of this *sūrah* also is monotheism. In deference to this central theme, a warning has also been sounded about the Day of Judgement as well because the real importance of monotheism is brought forth when there exists faith in the arrival of the Day in which justice will be dispensed, and when each person shall have to encounter the one and powerful God. No one can dare save any person from His grasp or speak before Him without His permission.

The basis of reasoning in this *sūrah* is the history of the preaching mission of the prophets of God: all prophets from Adam (sws) and Noah (sws) called people to this very religion of monotheism, and they too were taught by God through divine revelation just as the Qur'ān is being divinely revealed. The reason that various groups have differed with one another on religion is not that the prophets of God came with different religions; the only reason for this difference is personal enmity and envy. Even after true knowledge had been revealed by the Almighty various groups differed because of stubbornness and because of being inebriated with the notion of superiority over others. In this manner, people began dividing into various groups and sects. The Qur'ān has been revealed as a barometer and scale for the truth. If people do not accept the verdict of this scale, then it will be the scale of the Day of Judgement which will deliver their verdict.

A casual look at the motifs of the *sūrah* also shows that it was revealed at the end of the Makkan period right before migration to Madīnah. Thus the nature of the address of the Prophet (sws) to the leaders of the Quraysh is that of bidding farewell; in other words, he had fulfilled his obligation towards them; it is now their own responsibility, and if they still do not act responsibly, then they should be prepared for the consequences. Similarly, it is evident from what is said in this *sūrah* about the Muslims that they are now entering in a phase in which they will have to fulfill their obligation in the form of a collectivity and thus should be prepared for this. The Prophet (sws) is repeatedly assured that his responsibility was to clearly present the truth before the people which he has fulfilled; to forcibly inject faith in the hearts of people was never his responsibility; he should now consign their fate to God. In this regard, answers are also given to certain objections which were raised by the opponents on the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws).

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Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-10): The Prophet (sws) is addressed and informed that the very religion of monotheism which was divinely revealed to him by the Almighty was also divinely to the messengers before him and the method of revelation was also the same. Great and exalted is the Almighty; whatever is in the heavens and the earth is in His control; the heavens are renting asunder because of His fear; the angels are continuously glorifying Him and also seeking repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. God is observing those who have set up deities besides Him. The Prophet (sws) is not responsible for their faith. He should warn through the Arabic Qur'ān revealed to him the people of Makkah and its whereabouts of the Day on which the Almighty will gather all mankind, and then will admit the believers into Paradise and the disbelievers into Hell; if these people are not embracing faith, then this is not his responsibility. The established practice of God regarding guidance cannot be altered; only those will be guided who are worthy of being guided.

Verses (11-20): God alone is the Creator of the heavens and the earth; He only has their keys and He only blesses people with children and sustenance. No one shares His divinity. All the prophets of God preached this very religion of monotheism and urged people to adhere to it and not create any differences in it. Those who created differences in it did so after true knowledge had come to them from God and did so merely because of mutual enmity and prejudice. Had the Almighty not fixed a day to resolve this dispute, He would have decided their matter forthwith. The Prophet (sws) is directed to preach this very religion and strongly adhere to it; he should inform people that he has professed faith in this Book which the Almighty has revealed as a scale of justice and that he has been directed to decide affairs between them through this scale of justice; people who fight with him even after this will be inflicted by a grave punishment. The Prophet (sws) should warn them that they should not regard the Day of Judgement to be far off; they should benefit from the respite which has been granted to them by the Almighty; otherwise, they should remember that God is merciful and also powerful and revengeful. If He gives people some time even after their rebelliousness and spreading anarchy, He does so because of His established practice. Once this time expires, He will deal with everyone in the manner that person is worthy of.

Verses (21-26): If these idolaters have invented some partners of God who have invented a different religion than the one brought by the prophets of God, then neither this religion nor their partners of God will avail them on the Day of Judgement. On that Day, the idolaters will express great sorrow and frustration on their fate; only they will succeed who had faith and did righteous deeds. The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell his people that if he is very concerned about their guidance, then it is not because he wants some reward from them; it is merely because the obligation he feels towards his close relationship with them has made him anxious; if they embrace faith, they will be rewarded for it themselves. The Prophet (sws) is told that if these people regard his

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divine revelations to be concoctions, then this much should be sufficient for his satisfaction that he knows that it is God Who has blessed him with these revelations; if God wants, He can terminate this process and the Prophet (sws) on his own accord can never initiate it again. Moreover, what needs to be observed is the effects and blessings of this divine favour: how through it, He is obliterating evil and elevating the truth. Whatever these people say, the Prophet (sws) should disregard it; those who are worthy of it will take the initiative and accept his call; this should be enough for his satisfaction.

Verses (27-36): If these people regard their world superiority to be a reason of being on the right path, then the Prophet (sws) should tell them that before the favours of the Hereafter the greatest riches of this world have no significance. The Almighty wanted to protect people from the trials of Satan; hence He gave people who were slave to worldly pleasures as much as His wisdom entailed. Otherwise, He could have given them full respite so that they could have gathered all the riches of thre world. This respite by Him should not be misconceived by people. Everything is under His control. He can seize people whenever He wants to; however, He ignores people in spite of their ungrateful attitude and rebelliousness. If a person has keen eyes, he can clearly see from his own experiences and observations that every person is in God's control. If God does not protect people, then no means that they have can protect them. Whatever disbelievers gain is temporary and transient. In the Hereafter, God will grant eternal kingdom to those who embrace faith and put their trust in Him.

Verses (37-43): The true qualities of believers are highlighted and they are given some special instructions which were required by them for their guidance and for carrying out their responsibilities in the current and future circumstances. Contextual indications show that in that period of time the excesses committed by the disbelievers had greatly increased, and Muslims too were shaping up in the form of an organized group and community. Thus they were informed of certain essential instructions so that they do not take a wrong step in these testing times.

Verses (44-53): This is the closing section of the *sūrah*. At the beginning, the opponents are warned. After that, they are invited to accept the call of the Messenger and told that they still have a chance to accept this call and salvage themselves in the Hereafter. The Prophet (sws) is then directed to show patience if these people are not listening to him; he has fulfilled the responsibility that was imposed on him; forcing down faith in their hearts is not his responsibility. Such is the meanness of people that if God blesses them with mercy, they start showing conceit, and if they are afflicted with some calamity because of their misdeeds, they start to despair and become ungrateful. These people are very proud of their alleged deities; however, God has no partners. If because of their pride and vanity, they demand that God speak to them face to face, then they should know that whoever person God speaks to, He speaks through revelation and this has its own ways; it is such a revelation that has been sent to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws), and this is a great blessing of God on him and

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through his means on others otherwise before this he was neither aware of the Book nor of the details of faith and its requirements.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ﴿۱﴾ عٓسٓقٓ ﴿۲﴾ کَذٰلِکَ یُوۡحِیۡۤ اِلَیۡکَ وَ اِلَی الَّذِیۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِکَ ۙ اللّٰہُ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ ﴿۳﴾ لَہٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَ ہُوَ الۡعَلِیُّ الۡعَظِیۡمُ ﴿۴﴾ تَکَادُ السَّمٰوٰتُ یَتَفَطَّرۡنَ مِنۡ فَوۡقِہِنَّ وَ الۡمَلٰٓئِکَۃُ یُسَبِّحُوۡنَ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّہِمۡ وَ یَسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡنَ لِمَنۡ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ ہُوَ الۡغَفُوۡرُ الرَّحِیۡمُ ﴿۵﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اتَّخَذُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِہٖۤ اَوۡلِیَآءَ اللّٰہُ حَفِیۡظٌ عَلَیۡہِمۡ ۫ وَ مَاۤ اَنۡتَ عَلَیۡہِمۡ بِوَکِیۡلٍ ﴿۶﴾ وَ کَذٰلِکَ اَوۡحَیۡنَاۤ اِلَیۡکَ قُرۡاٰنًا عَرَبِیًّا لِّتُنۡذِرَ اُمَّ الۡقُرٰی وَ مَنۡ حَوۡلَہَا وَ تُنۡذِرَ یَوۡمَ الۡجَمۡعِ لَا رَیۡبَ فِیۡہِ ؕ فَرِیۡقٌ فِی الۡجَنَّۃِ وَ فَرِیۡقٌ فِی السَّعِیۡرِ ﴿۷﴾ وَ لَوۡ شَآءَ اللّٰہُ لَجَعَلَہُمۡ اُمَّۃً وَّاحِدَۃً وَّ لٰکِنۡ یُّدۡخِلُ مَنۡ یَّشَآءُ فِیۡ رَحۡمَتِہٖ ؕ وَ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ مَا لَہُمۡ مِّنۡ وَّلِیٍّ وَّ لَا نَصِیۡرٍ ﴿۸﴾ اَمِ اتَّخَذُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِہٖۤ اَوۡلِیَآءَ ۚ فَاللّٰہُ ہُوَ الۡوَلِیُّ وَ ہُوَ یُحۡیِ الۡمَوۡتٰی ۫ وَ ہُوَ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ قَدِیۡرٌ ﴿۹﴾ وَ مَا اخۡتَلَفۡتُمۡ فِیۡہِ مِنۡ شَیۡءٍ فَحُکۡمُہٗۤ اِلَی اللّٰہِ ؕ ذٰلِکُمُ اللّٰہُ رَبِّیۡ عَلَیۡہِ تَوَکَّلۡتُ ۬ؕ وَ اِلَیۡہِ اُنِیۡبُ ﴿۱۰﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious the Ever-Merciful.

This is Ḥā Mīm 'Ayn Sīn Qāf. It is in this manner that the wise Almighty sends down revelations to you, and in this manner has He been sending revelations to those who were before you. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and the earth and very lofty and exalted is He. The heavens are almost ripping apart from above, and the angels glorify the name of their Lord celebrating His praise, and seek repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. Be informed! He alone is the forgiver and the merciful. And God is watching over those who have made other accomplishers besides God, and you have not been deputed over them as an enforcer. (1-6)

And in this manner have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may warn the people of Makkah and those who dwell around it and warn them of the Day on which all will be gathered which is certain to come. On that Day, one group will enter Paradise and one will enter Hell. (7)

And if it had been God's will, He could have made them a single community. However, He admits to His mercy whomsoever He wills; and those who have been unjust to their souls will neither have any accomplisher nor helper. Have they set up other accomplishers besides Him? So they should bear in mind that God alone is the accomplisher. And He shall bring back the dead to life and has power over all things. And whatever matter you have differed, its judgement rests with God. He is my Lord. In Him I have put my trust, and to Him I turn. (8-10)

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Explanation

حٰمٓ ۝١ عٓسٓقٓ ۝٢[1]

This is the Qur'ānic name of the *sūrah*. Readers may remember that the previous two *sūrahs* too have this name. Here there is an addition of the words: عٓسٓقٓ. Commonality in names bears witness to the commonality in central themes. This addition is an indication of the fact that there are certain topics in this *sūrah* which are not found in the two previous ones. Thus by going through the analysis of the discourse of these *sūrahs*, the distinct topics can be ascertained.

كَذٰلِكَ يُوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْكَ وَاِلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۙ اللّٰهُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝٣[2]

The word كَذٰلِكَ refers to the topics mentioned in the *sūrah*. The name of the *sūrah* signifies a brief concept of these topics and hence a reference through this word to these topics is very apt. The implied meaning would be that the things which are being revealed to Muḥammad (sws) in the *sūrah* called by this name have also been revealed to prophets who came before him. Brevity pervades this verse in expressing its meanings. The overall message that is intended to be conveyed is something to the effect: "In this manner, the Almighty is sending His revelations to you the way He sent His revelations to the prophets who came earlier." Examples of such brevity can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* and more are forthcoming.

The word كَذٰلِكَ is also referring to the unity of content and to the similarity of the means of revelation. In other words, the Almighty taught the same things to all the prophets and messengers as He is teaching Muḥammad (sws) and for this teaching He adopted the same method as He did in his case. Hence there is nothing in this Book from any aspect which may startle people and be unknown to them. If they are startled and show aversion, then this is their own misdoing.

Succeeding verses point to the unity of content in the following words:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَا وَصّٰى بِهٖ نُوْحًا وَّالَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهٖٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰٓى اَنْ اَقِيْمُوا الدِّيْنَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوْا فِيْهِ ۭ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مَا تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَيْهِ. (٤٢:١٣)

He has enjoined on you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have now revealed to you, which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, with the assertion that adhere to this religion and do not create any divisions in it. What you are calling to is weighing heavily on the idolaters. (42:13)

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1. This is Ḥā Mīm 'Ayn Sīn Qāf.

2. It is in this manner that the wise Almighty sends down revelations to you, and in this manner has He been sending revelations to those who were before you.

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It is evident from this that the very Islam and the religion of monotheism to which the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) called the people was the one which all the earlier prophets were deputed to preach; however, the idolaters in their frenzied bias for the religion they had invented became enemies of the religion of the truth and the People of the Book too followed suit in the same vein.

As for the similarity of means, further ahead the words of the *sūrah* are:

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّكَلِّمَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا وَحْيًا اَوْ مِنْ وَّرَآئِ حِجَابٍ اَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُوْلًا فَيُوْحِيَ بِاِذْنِهٖ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيٌّ حَكِيْمٌ. وَ كَذٰلِكَ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ رُوْحًا مِّنْ اَمْرِنَا ؕ مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِيْ مَا الْكِتٰبُ وَلَا الْاِيْمَانُ وَلٰكِنْ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُوْرًا نَّهْدِيْ بِهٖ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا. (٤٢: ٥١-٥٢)

And it is not the status of any mortal that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger and through His permission, he sends revelation to him of what He wills. Exalted is He, and Wise. Thus have We revealed to you a spirit from our matters. (42:51-52)

It is evident from this that today those people who are demanding that if God speaks to His prophet, He should speak to them as well or He should appear before them so that they are able to see them and hear His words, then this is nothing but arrogance and foolishness on their part. Neither does God converse with anyone in this manner nor does it befit His majesty to appear before people. He has always stuck to this method that whomsoever He chooses as prophet He converses with him through revelations and there is a specific principle which governs these revelations.

The purpose of saying these words is to assure the Prophet (sws) and to conclusively communicate the truth to the opponents. Obviously, when he is calling people towards the same religion of truth to which all the prophets and messengers called, then he is not presenting something which could alarm and startle people. Those who are startled by it and are showing their aversion to it in fact oppose the teachings of all the prophets and are afflicted with bias and enmity. Similarly, if the Prophet (sws) is not able to make people observe God or make others hear Him when He is speaking, then this also is no flaw of his prophethood. He is presenting the revelations sent to him by God and whoever God speaks to, He does so by revelation. He does not bless anyone beyond this.

The mention of الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ from among God's noble attributes is meant to assure the Prophet (sws) and warn his opponents. Since God is الْعَزِيْزُ (powerful), He can catch hold the arrogant any time He wants to and if He does not catch them immediately then it is because He is granting them respite as per His wisdom. For this reason, the Prophet (sws) should repose his trust in God Who is powerful and wise, and consign the matter of these people to Him.

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لَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَهُوَ الۡعَلِیُّ الۡعَظِیۡمُ ﴿۴﴾[3]

This is an explanation of the Almighty's attribute الْعَزِيْزُ (powerful): whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him and everything is in His control. Neither is anyone His associate in any matter nor is anything beyond His control or jurisdiction. He is a very lofty and exalted being. And no one has the status to be His peer or equal. The implication is that if He is giving time to people, then this does not mean that people are beyond His control, and if He has bestowed someone with respect and honour, then that person should not become so conceited to demand observing Him or conversing with Him. The presence of God is exalted and lofty is His being.

تَکَادُ السَّمٰوٰتُ یَتَفَطَّرۡنَ مِنۡ فَوۡقِهِنَّ وَالۡمَلٰٓئِکَةُ یُسَبِّحُوۡنَ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّهِمۡ وَیَسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡنَ لِمَنۡ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡغَفُوۡرُ الرَّحِیۡمُ ﴿۵﴾[4]

This is an explanation of God's attributes الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيْمُ (lofty and exalted) mentioned in the previous verse. Such is the weight of His loftiness that the heavens above are almost ripping apart, and the angels because of being so near to Him are glorifying and celebrating His praises all the time out of His fear, and continue to seek repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. In other words, the foolish have made the angels partners to God and expect that such is their status before God that these angels will be able to secure for their worshippers high ranks; whereas, the fact is that the angels tremble with His fear and continuously glorify (do *tasbīḥ*) Him and celebrate His praises (do *ḥamd*).

The difference between *tasbīḥ* and *ḥamd* has been pointed out at an appropriate place in this exegesis. The former absolves God of all evil and the latter affirms every good in Him. In other words, these angels regard God beyond all things which are against His majesty, the most prominent of these being polytheism, and affirm all lofty attributes in Him, the most prominent of these being monotheism.

The words وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ allude to exactly the same thing which the following words of Sūrah al-Mu'min, the previous *sūrah* allude to:

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَحْمِلُوْنَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهٗ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا. (٤٠:٧)

Who are carrying the throne, and those who are around it glorify their Lord while celebrating His praises, profess faith and keep seeking for forgiveness for the believers. (40:7)

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3. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and the earth and very lofty and exalted is He.

4. The heavens are almost ripping apart from above, and the angels glorify the name of their Lord celebrating His praise, and seek repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. Be informed! He alone is the forgiver and the merciful.

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It is evident from the above cited verse that the angels seek forgiveness for those inhabitants of the earth who are believers. Since it was evident that this forgiveness they seek is for the believers, hence it was not mentioned in the verse under discussion. This seeking of forgiveness of the angels is their intercession which they are doing for the believers in the presence of their Lord.

The words اَلَآ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ sound an apt admonishment to the idolaters: they should make it very clear upon themselves that only God is One Who forgives and is merciful. If this was in the jurisdiction of the angels, then why would they so earnestly and humbly request God to forgive people?

وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ اللّٰهُ حَفِيْظٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ۝[5]

This verse admonishes the idolaters in very harsh words, and assures the Prophet (sws) that if even after these clear arguments those who have set up other accomplishers for themselves besides God and are adamant on this after all admonition and reminders, they should know that God is watching over them. The obvious outcome is that as soon as the time allotted to them expires, His wrath will seize them. After this, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he has not been made responsible to necessarily make them tread the path of truth; his responsibility was to communicate the truth to them which he is fulfilling and should keep on doing so as long as His Lord asks him to do so. If they are not accepting faith, they will be held accountable for it and not him. This aspect is discussed further ahead in the *sūrah* in the following words:

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ الْقُرٰى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۭ فَرِيْقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيْقٌ فِي السَّعِيْرِ ۝[6]

The word كَذٰلِكَ refers to the subject of the verse of the *sūrah*. In other words, just as the Almighty sent down His revelations to the prophets and messengers who came before the Prophet (sws) in a similar manner the Almighty has sent down this Arabic Qur'ān to him so that he can inform people in the central city of Arabia and its whereabouts.

The word Qur'ān is qualified by the attribute عَرَبِيًّا (Arabic) to delineate the favour of God and to conclusively deliver the truth. As I have explained earlier, in the exegesis

5. And God is watching over those who have made other accomplishers besides God, and you have not been deputed over them as an enforcer.

6. And in this manner have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may warn the people of Makkah and those who dwell around it and warn them of the day on which all will be gathered which is certain to come. On that day, one group will enter Paradise and one will enter Hell.

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of verse 24 of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm al-Sajdah this measure left the people of Arabia with no excuse that the religion of God was not fully explained to them.

The words أُمَّ الْقُرٰى refer to Makkah because they imply the central city, and it was Makkah which occupied this status in Arabia. Here instead of using the word Makkah, the words أُمَّ الْقُرٰى are used for the purpose of conclusive communication of the truth; if a message has been delivered to the central city, then this means that people of the country have been openly communicated it. If instead of أُمَّ الْقُرٰى, this call sprang from some other part of Arabia, then some people could have raised the objection that why did the Qur'ān address their masses instead of addressing their leaders and intelligentsia because it was this section of people who have properly evaluated the weight carried by this call.

Some people interpret the words وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا as referring to the whole world. The reason for their interpretation is that the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) was sent as a messenger to the whole world; they are of the view that for this reason, this expression does not does not merely refer to the nearby cities of Makkah or Arabia but those of the whole world. Although this fact itself is true that the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is the last and final prophet of God and for this reason his call and message is for the whole world, however, this interpretation of the words وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا clearly exceeds their ambit of application in the first place, and in the second it is not even needed for the real purpose. The Prophet Muḥammad (sws) himself has said that he has been sent with two spheres of preaching: one general and the other specific. His specific sphere relates to Makkah and Arabia and to them he conclusively communicated the truth in a direct manner; his general sphere relates to the whole world and the Qur'ān as well as the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) has imposed the responsibility of bearing witness to the true religion on the Muslim *ummah* till the Day of Judgement, and it is on the basis of this responsibility that the Almighty has bestowed this *ummah* with the status of witnesses to the truth (شھدآء اللہ فی الارض). In its capacity as witnesses to the truth, it is the responsibility of this *ummah* that just as the messenger of God has borne witness to the true religion before members of this *ummah*, in a similar manner, they should bear witness to it before other people. As a requirement of this responsibility, it is the honour of this *ummah* that one group among it will always adhere to the truth – it will adhere to it even when the poison of sin runs in every vein of this world.[7]

After general warning (*indhār-i 'ām*), the words وَ تُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ mention specific warning (*indhār-i khās*): the Prophet (sws) should specifically warn these people of يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ (the day of gathering). Obviously the words يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ refer to the Day

7. I have discussed this view in detail in my book: *Da'wat-e dīn awr us kā ṭarīqah-i kār*. Those who would like to study the arguments of this view may look up this book. See: Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī. *Da'wat-i dīn awr us ka ṭarīqah-i kār*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1989), 33-47.

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of Judgement. Calling the Day of Judgement by this name, creates the awareness that on this Day the Almighty will gather everyone without any exception: the worshipers and the worshipped, the leaders and the followers, the prophets and their companions as well as the disbelievers and their supporters. In the presence of all these in His open court of hearing the Almighty will decide the true role each person played with regard to His religion and will pinpoint the people who differed and created anarchy as well as those who tried to maintain its unity and purity and will also single out those who deserve reward and those who deserve punishment.

The words فَرِيْقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيْقٌ فِي السَّعِيْرِ describe the verdict of the open court hearing: on that Day, one group – that is the believers – will necessarily enter Paradise and the other group – that is the disbelievers – will necessarily go to Hell.

وَلَوْشَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ يُّدْخِلُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ وَالظّٰلِمُوْنَ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿۸﴾[8]

This verse answers an objection that when the Almighty has given people only one religion, why did He not desire that all adhere to it? Why did He give them the liberty to create difference in this religion and the result of this attitude should ultimately make one group worthy of Paradise and another worthy of Hell?

The answer given is that had God wanted to do this, He would have done it; no one could have stopped Him; however, He did not desire that He force people to accept His guidance; on the contrary, He desired that He give people vision and intellect and also give them the liberty to choose the guidance presented to them if they wanted in the light of their vision and intellect and thus become worthy of God's mercy. The intention referred to in the words يُّدْخِلُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ is subservient to His mercy and justice. For this reason, these words would mean that His justice will govern which people will enter His mercy. The Qur'ān has made evident this principle by the subsequent words as well: وَالظّٰلِمُوْنَ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ie the wrongdoers (the disbelievers and idolaters) will neither have any accomplisher nor any helper. In other words, neither will their alleged deities be of any avail to them nor will they have any group or faction which could help them. It is evident from this that only those people will be deprived of God's mercy who are unjust to their souls and who are idolaters, and this will be so because it will be a requirement of His justice. His intention is based on His justice and no one has the power to change His intention.

This topic is mentioned in the Qur'ān at various places, and I have explained it many times in this exegesis. For further explanation, I will cite some verses.

In Sūrah Yūnus, the words are:

8. And if it had been God's will, He could have made them a single community. However, He admits to His mercy whomsoever He wills; and those who have been unjust to their souls will neither have any accomplisher nor helper.

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وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَاٰمَنَ مَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتّٰى يَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ. وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ اَنْ تُؤْمِنَ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَيَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ. (۱۰:۹۹-۱۰۰)

Had your Lord intended, whoever are in the earth would have embraced faith; so will you force people to become believers, and no soul can profess faith except with God's permission and God burdens with filth those who do not use their intellect. (10:99-100)

It is evident from this that the matter of faith and guidance rest on the intention of God and His intention blesses those people the urge to accept faith who use their intellect. The intellect of those who do not use it is buried beneath a pile of filth so that they are not able to see the light radiated by faith and guidance. This topic is mentioned in Sūrah al-Sajdah in the following words:

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَاٰتَيْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدٰىهَا. (۳۲: ۱۳)

Had We intended, We have given each soul its guidance. (32:13)

In other words, if the Almighty intended to force people to accept faith, He would have made everyone a believer; on the contrary, He tried people by giving them the freedom as to who chooses the path of faith and who the path of disbelief; those who will tread the path of disbelief will be cast into Hell by Him and those who will tread the path of belief will be admitted into Paradise by Him.

This premise is mentioned very clearly in Sūrah al-Dahr in the following words:

اِنَّ هٰذِهٖ تَذْكِرَةٌ ۚ فَمَنْ شَآءَ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ سَبِيْلًا. وَمَا تَشَآءُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا. يُّدْخِلُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ وَالظّٰلِمِيْنَ اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا. (۷۶:۲۹-۳۱)

This is a reminder. So whoever desires he should take the path of his Lord and you will not desire until God desires. Indeed, God is all-knowing, wise. He admits into His mercy whomsoever He wishes. And for those who have been unjust to their souls, He has prepared a grievous punishment. (76:29-31)

The Prophet (sws) and his companions are assured in these verses: they should not be worried on the stubbornness and obduracy shown by people; the Qur'ān is not something that should be forced upon them; it is merely a reminder; so they should remind people through it. Whoever wants should profess faith and whoever wants should adopt the path of disbelief. If the Prophet (sws) and his companions desire that these people should embrace faith, then merely having a desire can bear no fruit unless God intends and God's intention is governed by His knowledge and His wisdom. He admits into His mercy only those whom He desires and He desires so for

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only those who do not wrong their souls and in fact make use of the abilities given to them by God and also give due importance to His guidance. As for those who are blind in spite of having eyes, then for such wrong-doers the Almighty has prepared a grievous punishment.

أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۖ فَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ وَهُوَ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٩﴾[9]

The question posed in this verse is meant to express wonder and negation. In the previous verse, it was said that such people do not have any accomplisher or supporter. This premise is further explained here: if they have set up other accomplishers for themselves besides God, then this is their foolishness. Only God is the real accomplisher – both in the Herein and in the Hereafter. It is He who will bring back the dead to life and every one is going to come to His presence. So how can anyone else become the accomplisher. And if God has power over everything, then in His presence what will be the need of any accomplisher and what benefit can be the protection of the greatest of accomplishers before Him?

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِن شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ ﴿١٠﴾[10]

In verse 8, Muḥammad (sws) was assured that he should not be worried on the stubbornness and arrogance of his opponents. The established practice of God regarding providing guidance to people is unalterable. He was told that his opponents are caught in the noose of God's divine law, and so he should consign their matter to God. As a result of this command, the Prophet (sws) consigned their matter to God. Since what is said in this verse was actually a compliance of what is said in verse 8, no new directive was required from God and what needed to be said was said through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). Thus the words of this verse from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) are directed at his opponents. They are told by him that in whatever matter of religion they differed – whether it was the belief in *tawḥīd* or in the Hereafter – his responsibility was only to deliver the truth to them, which he has; now the decision rests with God; God will decide whether he fulfilled this responsibility of delivering the truth or whether these people made a mistake in recognizing the truth; God is the Lord of the Prophet (sws) and hence in God has the Prophet (sws) put his trust and to God he turns to decide between him and these people.

9. Have they set up other accomplishers besides Him? So they should bear in mind that God alone is the accomplisher. And He shall bring back the dead to life and has power over all things.

10. And whatever matter you have differed, its judgement rests with God. He is my Lord. In Him I have put my trust, and to Him I turn.

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Section II: Verses (11-20)

In the succeeding verses, the topic of monotheism discussed in earlier verses is further explained: The real accomplisher is the Almighty alone. Sustenance and offspring are His gifts. The harmony found in the discordant elements of this universe clearly evidences the fact that except for the will and intention of the one and only God, there is no other will or intention that can interfere in it.

After this, the topic discussed in the first verse is explained: from Noah (sws) to Jesus (sws) every prophet has preached this very religion of monotheism and stopped people from creating differences in it. However, their followers created differences in it even after they had been given clear knowledge and thereby deprived themselves of God's guidance.

After this, the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is directed to preach this very religion of the prophets before people and should strongly adhere to its call. He should inform those who are opposing his call that he has professed faith in the Book of God which He has revealed to judge between the differences they have created; if they do not accept its judgement, then the scale set up on Final Day will judge between them; the Day of Judgement is certain to come; their current state of affluence should not lead them to think that it is the result of they being on the right path; the Almighty gives affluence and riches in this world to those also who are the enemies of the truth; however, they will have no share in the Hereafter.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to study the subsequent verses.

Text and Translation

فَاطِرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّمِنَ الْاَنْعَامِ اَزْوَاجًا ۚ يَذْرَؤُكُمْ فِيْهِ ؕ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهٖ شَيْءٌ ۚ وَهُوَ
السَّمِيْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ ﴿١١﴾ لَهٗ مَقَالِيْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٢﴾ شَرَعَ
لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَا وَصّٰى بِهٖ نُوْحًا وَّالَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهٖٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰٓى اَنْ اَقِيْمُوا الدِّيْنَ وَلَا
تَتَفَرَّقُوْا فِيْهِ ؕ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مَا تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَيْهِ ؕ اَللّٰهُ يَجْتَبِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمَا
تَفَرَّقُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى لَّقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ اُوْرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ ﴿١٤﴾ فَلِذٰلِكَ فَادْعُ ۚ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَ
قُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ كِتٰبٍ ۚ وَاُمِرْتُ لِاَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ؕ اَللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ؕ لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ ؕ لَا حُجَّةَ
بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ؕ اَللّٰهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا ۚ وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُحَآجُّوْنَ فِى اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيْبَ لَهٗ حُجَّتُهُمْ
دَاحِضَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ﴿١٦﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيْزَانَ ؕ وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ

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لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ ﴿١٧﴾ يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهَا ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا ۙ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ ۗ
أَلَا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُمَارُونَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿١٨﴾ اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ ﴿١٩﴾
مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

He alone is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, He has created pairs for you from your own species and created species from the cattle as well; He sows you in this cultivated field. Nothing is like Him. He alone hears all and sees all. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. He gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases. Indeed, He has knowledge of all things. (11-12)

He has enjoined on you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have revealed to you, which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, with the assertion that adhere to this religion and do not create any divisions in it. What you are calling to is weighing heavily on the idolaters. God chooses whomsoever He wants to come to Him and He guides those to Himself who turn to Him. (13)

And these people divided themselves merely because of mutual obduracy only after true knowledge had come to them. And had not a thing been ascertained by God till an appointed term, He would have immediately decided among them. And those who have been made the inheritors of the Book after them are inflicted with a baffling doubt. (14)

Therefore call people to this religion and adhere to it the way you have been directed to and do not follow their desires. And declare: "I profess faith in the Book God has revealed, and I have been directed to judge between you. God alone is our Lord and your Lord. Our deeds are for us and your deeds for you; no argument is needed among us. God will bring us all together and to Him all shall return." (15)

As for those who argue about God after He has been acknowledged, their arguments will have no weight with their Lord, and wrath is on them and for them is a grievous punishment. (16)

It is God who has revealed the Book with decisive truth and the scale and who knows the Hour of Doom may be fast approaching. Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten it, and those who believe in it dread it and know it is certain to come. Beware! Those who dispute about the Hour of doom have strayed far into error. (17-18)

Merciful is God towards His servants. He blesses sustenance to whomsoever He desires and is very powerful and mighty. And whoever seeks the harvest of the world to come, We increase his harvest and [also give his share to him from this world also] and whoever desires the harvest of this world, We grant him a share of it but in the world to come he shall have no share at all. (19-20)

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Explanation

فَاطِرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ جَعَلَ لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اَزۡوَاجًا وَّمِنَ الۡاَنۡعَامِ اَزۡوَاجًا ۚ يَذۡرَؤُكُمۡ فِيۡهِ ؕ لَيۡسَ كَمِثۡلِهٖ شَىۡءٌ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡبَصِيۡرُ ﴿۱۱﴾[11]

This verse is a further explanation of verse 10: عَلَيۡهِ تَوَكَّلۡتُ وَاِلَيۡهِ اُنِيۡبُ. It is God Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and it is He Who has created human beings and all other creatures. There is no one else who can be a peer to Him viz a viz His being and attributes; so who can be worthy of being called His associate and regarded to be one's Lord and accomplisher.

The antecedent of the genitive pronoun in يَذۡرَؤُكُمۡ فِيۡهِ is not found in a specific word; it refers to the meaning which emanates from these words. It emanates from the words that since God has created pairs from within the species of human beings and the cattle, it is as if He has set up a system of production or harvest within their categories in which He continues to nourish and sustain them. Such pronouns are used in Arabic. Some very clear examples can be seen in the preceding *sūrahs*.

In the previous section of the verse, the power and wisdom of the creator of heavens and the earth was alluded to; the words لَيۡسَ كَمِثۡلِهٖ شَىۡءٌ point to the consequence of these: Is there any one who can be a peer to the being Who has created such great things as the heavens and the earth and Who has set up such an amazing system of creation of human beings. Nothing is like Him nor can anything ever be like Him. He is peerless as far as His being and attributes are concerned. Consequently, if He is the creator of the heavens, then it is He who brings down whatever descends from them; similarly, when He is the creator of the earth, then it is he who brings out whatever comes out of it. Moreover, when He is the creator of man and woman – in fact the male and female gender of all forms of creation, then it is He Who brings into existence whatever creation comes into being from them. In other words, when no one other than God can be regarded as the creator of the heavens and the earth and of man and woman, then how can things which come into existence become of the inter-play of these objects be ascribed to some other being? Who is it that has accomplished even one of these tasks or has the capability of doing them so that he can be regarded as God's peer.

The words وَهُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡبَصِيۡرُ portray a further message to the previous one: just as a study of this universe reveals that no one is God's peer, it also reveals that He alone is the one Who really listens and knows. A creator who really listens and knows can bring into existence such an expansive universe and He alone can keep it intact. So when His power is matchless and His knowledge is all-embracing, then everyone

11. He alone is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, He has created pairs for you from your own species and created species from the cattle as well; He sows you in this cultivated field. Nothing is like Him. He alone hears all and sees all.

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should worship Him and ask their needs from Him alone; He listens to all and knows everything; no means or mediation is required to ask from Him.

لَهٗ مَقَالِيْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۭ اِنَّهٗ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٢﴾[12]

When the Almighty is the creator of the heavens and the earth, then it is essential that He be their master as well. How is it possible that He create them and then consign the keys of their treasures to others? Rain comes down at His bidding and the earth expels its treasure at His directive. It is God Who as per the dictates of His knowledge and wisdom blesses with abundance of livelihood whomsoever He wants to and constricts the livelihood of whomsoever He wants to. No deity has any role in sustaining and providing people nor do they have any part in the distribution of sustenance. All these matters are in the jurisdiction of God. For this reason, He alone is worthy of being showing gratitude. He has knowledge of everything and hence people should only pin their hopes in Him. They should fear Him alone and if anyone has constricted resources and provisions, he should not make this evil estimation that God has no knowledge of his circumstances or that He has done injustice to him; on the contrary, he should rest assured that whatever is happening is in God's knowledge and there is wisdom in it.

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَا وَصّٰى بِهٖ نُوْحًا وَّالَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهٖٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰٓى اَنْ اَقِيْمُوا الدِّيْنَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوْا فِيْهِ ۭ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مَا تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَيْهِ ۭ اَللّٰهُ يَجْتَبِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ ﴿١٣﴾[13]

This verse while addressing the Quraysh and the people of Arabia explains the introductory verses of this *sūrah* in which the Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that the religion of truth which is being revealed to him is the very one which was revealed to earlier prophets and messengers. Thus the Almighty has prescribed for them the same religion as He prescribed for Noah (sws) and which is now being revealed to Muḥammad (sws). This same religion was also prescribed to Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws). Thus this religion is not something new or alien to them; in fact, every prophet from the beginning to this final Prophet (sws) preached this very religion and this is the true religion of God.

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12. Nothing is like Him. He alone hears all and sees all. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. He gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases. Indeed, He has knowledge of all things.

13. He has enjoined on you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have revealed to you, which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, with the assertion that adhere to this religion and do not create any divisions in it. What you are calling to is weighing heavily on the Idolaters. God chooses whomsoever He wants to come to Him and He guides those to Himself who turn to Him.

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The prophets of God are mentioned here in a particular sequence: at the beginning, the first and last of them – Noah (sws) and Muḥammad (sws) – are mentioned. Then three great prophets – Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) – are specially mentioned who came in between. These three are specially mentioned because those who claimed to follow them existed before the Qur'ān: the idolaters of Arabia claimed to be the followers of Abraham (sws), while the Jews and Christians claimed to be the followers of Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) respectively. In this manner, the whole history of the prophets is concisely referred to, and *ummahs* worthy of mention too are highlighted.

The words اَنْ اَقِيْمُوا الدِّيْنَ وَ لَا تَتَفَرَّقُوْا فِيْهِ mention the religion which was enjoined upon these prophets and also mention the guidance about this religion was given through these prophets to their followers. The definite article ال on الدِّيْنَ is of the same category as the one on الْكِتٰبَ . Just as the word الْكِتٰبَ means "the Book of God," the word الدِّيْنَ means "the religion of God." The religion of God has always been Islam as is mentioned in the following verse: اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الْاِسْلَامُ. (۱۹:۳) (the real religion before God is Islam, (3:19)). The foundation of this religion is the pure and complete concept of monotheism. It was this religion which the Almighty gave to Noah (sws) – in fact to Adam (sws),[14] and it was this very religion which was revealed to Muḥammad (sws). Its beliefs and foundations are the same from the beginning to the end. If there is any difference it is in the corollaries of the *sharī'ah* which the Qur'ān terms as شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا.

The *ummahs* have been directed to establish this religion and not create differences in it. This directive is similar to what is given in the verse: وَ اعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّ لَا تَفَرَّقُوْا (۱۰۳:۳) (and together cling to the rope of God and let nothing divide you, (3:103)). To establish religion means to sincerely believe in tenets which are meant to be believed in and to honestly and righteously follow its practical directives; moreover, people should be continuously watched over lest they should become negligent or indifferent to it and it should be fully taken care of that innovators are not able to create any inroads in it.

The expression لَا تَتَفَرَّقُوْا refers to the fact that this religion is the rope of God; hence it is the obligation of every person to hold steadfast to it; it should not be the case that people regard whatever rope that comes into their hands to be the rope of God and lets go of the real rope. If one's relation with this rope of God is broken, then the binding thread will be torn apart. Then nothing will be able to bind people.

In كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مَا تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَيْهِ the word الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ refers to the idolaters of the Quraysh. It is stated that the Almighty revealed for them the same religion which He revealed to all

14. The actual history of the prophets of God begin with Adam (sws); however, the Qur'ān generally begins it with Noah (sws). The reason for this is that history prior to Noah (sws) is completely in the dark.

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prophets and this same religion was preached by their great ancestor Abraham (sws); however, what the Prophet (sws) is calling them to is weighing heavily on them.

Though the words used in مَا تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَيْهِ are general, yet contextual indications show that they relate to monotheism. It is specified at a number of places in the Qur'ān that the greatest aversion which the idolaters had was to the call of monotheism given by to them by the Qur'ān.

The words اَللّٰهُ يَجْتَبِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and ask him to show patience with regard to these idolaters; however much he may be desirous of their faith, it is God's will which shall prevail and God's will is governed by His wisdom and established practice. He guides only those to Himself who themselves turn to Him for guidance. Those who do not do so are deprived of the urge to gain more guidance. The preposition إِلَىٰ after يَجْتَبِيْٓ shows that a *taḍmīn* occurs here. This style has been explained at many places in this exegesis.

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى لَّقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ ﴿١٤﴾[15]

The afore-mentioned *ummahs* of the prophets are rebuked in this verse: even after being blessed with the light of divine knowledge they differed with each other merely because of stubbornness, and were led into error. If someone slips and falls in the darkness of night, he can be forgiven to some extent; however, if someone slips in broad daylight merely because of stubbornness, then he himself is responsible for his foolishness. To understand the nature of these differences referred to in the verse, it would perhaps be sufficient to say that the differences which arose between the scholars and jurists of the Jews are the same as the one which have arisen between Muslims. The only difference is that this *ummah* has the Qur'ān preserved with it. Hence it has a scale to judge between these differences; however, the Jews lost the Torah and for this reason nothing remained which could resolve their differences.

From the very beginning an atmosphere of altercation prevailed between the *ummah* constituted by Jesus (sws) and the Jews, and the real cause of this was the enmity shown by the scholars of the Jews. Merely because of stubbornness and jealousy they became the enemies of the followers of Jesus (sws). Later the Christians too became divided into many sects and Saint Paul deprived them of the light of both the Torah and Gospel. After that when the Almighty wanted to show them the light of the Qur'ān, the Jews, the Christians and the Quraysh tried to violently put it out – a description of which our readers have been studying in the Qur'ān. The reason for the

15. And these people divided themselves merely because of mutual obduracy only after true knowledge had come to them. And had not a thing been ascertained by God till an appointed term, He would have immediately decided among them. And those who have been made the inheritors of the Book after them are inflicted with a baffling doubt.

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enmity of Jews with the Qur'ān was that they did not want the reins of religious leadership to be transferred to the Israelites, and the reasons because of which the Quraysh were hostile to the Prophet (sws) are evident from these *sūrahs*. This situation has been expressed by the Qur'ān by the words: وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ (and these people divided themselves merely because of mutual obduracy only after true knowledge had come to them) which means that whichever *ummah* adopted the way of creating disputes and differences did so because of its own misdeeds and mutual enmity. As far as fGod and His Messenger are concerned, they continued to guide people to the straight path.

The words وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى لَّقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ sound a warning to these *ummahs* and an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that since His Lord has decided that each *ummah* will be given a certain respite until the truth is conclusively conveyed to it, hence they are being given this time; had this not been the case, the matter would have been decided between them without any delay.

The section of the verse وَ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ is related to the sentence وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ. The sentence in between is parenthetical in nature and is meant for admonishment. In other words, when these *ummahs* differed with each other after knowledge had come to them from God, the result was that people who later became the recipients of the Torah were afflicted with nagging doubts by the Torah. This topic has been discussed in the following words in the previous *sūrah*: وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ ۭ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ. (٤١:٤٥) (and We gave the Book to Moses; then differences were created in it; had not a decision between made by your Lord, their dispute would have been settled, and in indeed they are afflicted from it with a baffling doubt, (41:45)). Linguistic research on the word مُرِيبٍ has been presented at an appropriate place of this exegesis. The words الَّذِيْنَ اُوْرِثُوا الْكِتٰبَ refer to the difference of the Jews who became the recipients of the Torah after their ancestors. Since they received the Torah full of discrepancies, it was but natural for them to be afflicted with perplexing doubts, and this situation entailed that they should have given due value and importance to the Qur'ān which could resolve these discrepancies. However, they opposed it out of sheer obstinacy and envy. Generally people have interpreted the word الْكِتٰبَ of the above quoted expression to refer to the Qur'ān; however, there is no contextual indication to support this.

فَلِذٰلِكَ فَادْعُ ۚ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ اُمِرْتَ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَقُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ كِتٰبٍ ۚ وَاُمِرْتُ لِاَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ۭ اَللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ۭ لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ ۭ لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۭ اَللّٰهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا ۚ وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٥﴾[16]

16. Therefore call people to this religion and adhere to it the way you have been direct to and do not follow their desires. And declare: "I profess faith in the Book God has revealed and I have been directed to judge between you. God alone is our Lord and your Lord. Our deeds

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In this verse, the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is directed to call people to this very religion of truth which is the common religion of all the prophets of God; however much his enemies oppose him, he should pay absolutely no attention to them; and strongly adhere to what he has been told.

The words وَ لَا تَتَّبِعۡ اَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ explain in a negative way the perseverance the Prophet (sws) must show: he must not follow their base desires. This implies that he should not follow the religious innovations they have fabricated in order to make their desires part of religion. The word اَهۡوَآءَ refers to religious innovations, as is explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis refers to. This is because these innovations spring from desires.

The expression وَ قُلۡ اٰمَنۡتُ بِمَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنۡ كِتٰبٍ refers to the fact that the Prophet (sws) should tell those people who are fighting with him in support of their religious innovations that he has professed faith in the Book of God; so how can he follow their innovations and desires?

The words وَ اُمِرۡتُ لِاَعۡدِلَ بَيۡنَكُمۡ imply that the Prophet (sws) has not come to follow their innovations and desires; he has come to judge between them with justice; they have created disputes and differences in the religion of God, and he has been directed to judge these differences and tell them what is right and what is wrong; so they should not expect him to follow their innovations and if they have the urge to know then they should try to ask him how much truth is there in these innovations and how much falsehood, and what is the true unadulterated religion of God.

The words اَللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمۡ ؕ لَنَاۤ اَعۡمَالُنَا وَلَكُمۡ اَعۡمَالُكُمۡ are meant to admonish and warn them through the tongue of the Prophet (sws): they should remember that it is God Who is the Lord of the believers and it is He Who is the Lord of the disbelievers; both factions will come to His presence one Day; they should not erroneously believe that their Lord will be someone else than God; they should also remember that both factions will be responsible for their own deeds; if the believers have communicated the truth to the disbelievers, then they have fulfilled their responsibility and are not liable for them before God; the disbelievers will themselves bear the good or bad consequences of their attitude. This topic is also discussed in the following verses of Sūrah Yūnus: وَاِنۡ كَذَّبُوۡكَ فَقُلۡ لِّىۡ عَمَلِىۡ وَلَكُمۡ عَمَلُكُمۡ ۚ اَنۡتُمۡ بَرِيۡٓـُٔوۡنَ مِمَّاۤ اَعۡمَلُ وَاَنَا بَرِىۡٓءٌ مِّمَّا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ. (۱۰:۴۱) (if they refute you, tell them: "to me my deeds and to you yours; you are free from responsibility for what I do and I am free from yours," (10:41)).

The words لَا حُجَّةَ بَيۡنَنَا وَ بَيۡنَكُمۡ imply that if even after this debate, discussion and explanation they are not being able to understand the reality, then there is no need to extend the conversation; the matter now rests with God – He will gather all and judge between them, and they should remember that the final abode of everyone is with

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are for us and your deeds for you; no argument is needed among us. God will bring us all together and to Him all shall return."

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Him.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُحَآجُّوْنَ فِي اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيْبَ لَهٗ حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ﴿١٦﴾[17]

The word محاجة means to dispute and to engage in silly arguments, and in فِي اللّٰهِ the *muḍāf* is suppressed ie. فِي تَوْحِيْدِ اللّٰهِ because the dispute did not relate to God but to His oneness (*tawḥīd*). Not even the idolaters refuted God let alone the People of the Book; however, to believe in God while ascribing partners to Him is not acceptable in religion; it is essential to believe in Him while regarding Him to be the one and only God; if someone disputes in the matter of His oneness, then it is as if He is disputing about God and actually negating Him.

The meaning of the expression مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيْبَ لَهٗ is almost the same as مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ. In other words, this dispute has arisen after believing in God. Obviously, when the teaching of all prophets from Noah (sws) to Jesus (sws) has been the same – all of them calling people to the oneness of God – then this only means that the ancestors of the Quraysh, the Jews and the Christians have accepted the oneness of God. If after this acknowledgement from them, their followers are raising these disputes, then this is not argumentation – this is silly argumentation. Such silly argumentation is not going to avail them before God and is destined to be routed.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيْزَانَ ؕ وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيْبٌ ﴿١٧﴾[18]

The word الْكِتٰبَ refers to the Qur'ān and the word الْمِيْزَانَ is an elucidation of this word. The verse states that in order resolve the mutual disputes of the followers of these prophets and to distinguish good from evil, the Qur'ān was revealed by the Almighty as a scale of justice. Earlier, in verse 15, it had been declared from the tongue of the Prophet (sws): وَقُلْ آمَنتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللهُ مِن كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ (And declare: "whatever Book has revealed, I profess faith in it and I have been directed to judge between you.") The verse under discussion states this proclamation from another aspect. It is obvious that when the Almighty deputed the Prophet (sws) to decide the differences between the followers of other prophets, it was essential that a true book be given to him which may act as a scale of justice, and he can tell people by weighing this scale how much truth they have and how much falsehood. It is because of this very feature of the Qur'ān that it is also called *muhaymin* which means a scale

17. As for those who argue about God after He has been acknowledged, their arguments will have no weight with their Lord, and wrath is on them and for them is a grievous punishment.

18. It is God who has revealed the Book with decisive truth and the scale and who knows the Hour of Doom may be fast approaching.

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and a barometer. In Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, this topic is expressed in the following words: وَ اَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ. (٢٥:٥٧) (and with them revealed the Book and the Scale so that people adhere to justice, (57:25)).

The sentence وَ مَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيْبٌ is very eloquent and comprehensive. The implication is that fortunate are the people who will distinguish between good and evil and resolve their differences in accordance with the judgment made by this scale of justice. Otherwise, the Day of Judgement will in any case decide their matter and no one will be able to run away from this decision; they should not regard the Day of Judgement to be far off; it may well be near; where will those people run from the scale of justice of the Day of Judgement who are evading the scale of justice of the Qur'ān.

يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهَا ۚ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مُشْفِقُوْنَ مِنْهَا ۙ وَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُمَارُوْنَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿١٨﴾[19]

These people think that the Day of Judgement is merely a bluff; for this reason, they are showing indifference to it; in fact, they obdurately remark: If it is to come, why is it not coming? The verse says that those who do not believe in the Day of Judgement to seek hasten its arrival; it is as if it is merely a matter of jest for them; however, those who believe in it, understand its horrific nature and fear and dread it.

The sentence اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُمَارُوْنَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ expresses sorrow at the state of deprivation of these people who are disputing such an obvious reality as the Day of Judgement. It is said that these people have strayed far into error. Their eyes will open when it shall be of no avail to them; each person will then encounter his fate and will not be able to escape from it.

اَللّٰهُ لَطِيْفٌۢ بِعِبَادِهٖ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيْزُ ﴿١٩﴾[20]

This verse states the reason why the Almighty gives so much time to the defiant and the mischief-mongers so that they become audacious enough to demand the hastening of punishment and the Day of Judgement. It is said that God is very merciful to His servants, and takes the initiative in being merciful; He is not in a hurry to punish people; in spite of the defiance of the defiant, He keeps providing them with the provisions of life. This is because if they want they can benefit from this respite and mend their ways and thereby become worthy of their Lord's eternal mercy.

The second reason for this is that God is very powerful and mighty, as is referred to

19. Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten it, and those who believe in it dread it and know it is certain to come. Beware! Those who dispute about the Hour of doom have strayed far into error.

20. Merciful is God towards His servants. He blesses with sustenance to whomsoever He desires and is very powerful and mighty.

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by the words: وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيْزُ. No one has the power to evade His grasp; so when no one is beyond His grasp nor can anyone ever be, why should God show haste? Hastiness is needed by one who fears that the prey might escape his grasp.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ حَرْثَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهٗ فِيْ حَرْثِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهٗ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنْ نَّصِيْبٍ ﴿٢٠﴾[21]

This is a further explanation of the established practice of God referred to earlier: it is not God's way of providing only those Who worship Him; He provides both the virtuous and the wicked; however, those who strive for harvest in the Hereafter, God blesses their harvest of the Hereafter and also provides them as much as He wants to in this world from His favour and blessings. As for those who are after this worldly life only and are heedless of the Hereafter, He provides them in this world as much as His wisdom entails but they will have no share in the Hereafter.

The words نُؤْتِهٖ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا are suppressed after نَزِدْ لَهٗ فِيْ حَرْثِهٖ as per textual indications. Parallelism testifies to this suppression because the words نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا are present in the parallel clause. In Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, this subject is discussed in the following words:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهٗ فِيْهَا مَا نَشَآءُ لِمَنْ نُّرِيْدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهٗ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصْلٰىهَا مَذْمُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا. وَمَنْ اَرَادَ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَسَعٰى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَّشْكُوْرًا. كُلًّا نُّمِدُّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مِنْ عَطَآءِ رَبِّكَ ۭ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَآءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُوْرًا (۱۷:۱۸-۲۰)

Whoever should desire worldly pleasures, We provide in this world what they want and for whom We want. Then We have prepared for them Hell, which they will enter, censured and banished. And whoever desires the Hereafter and exerts the effort worthy for it and they are believers also, then they are the ones whose effort is ever appreciated [by God]. With the blessing of your Lord We help them also and these also, and the door of your Lord's blessings does not close on anyone. (17:18-20)

Section III: Verses (21-36)

It is evident from the previous section of verses that all the prophets and messengers of God have preached this religion of monotheism which is being preached by Muḥammad (sws). Now in the succeeding verses, it is being said that if the alleged deities of these idolaters have fabricated some other religion for them, then this religion will not be of any avail to them before God; on the Day of Judgement, such

21. And whoever seeks the harvest of the world to come, We increase his harvest and [also give his share to him from this world also] and whoever desires the harvest of this world, We grant him a share of it but in the world to come he shall have no share at all.

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people will feel remorse and sorrow for what they did; on that day, only those people will succeed who will earn for it by professing faith and doing righteous deeds.

After that, three objections of the opponents of the Prophet (sws) are answered one after the other.

Firstly, the objection that if the Prophet (sws) is diligently and passionately calling them to this religion, then it is not because their welfare is dear to him; it is because of a purely personal motive.

Secondly, the objection that whatever discourse the Prophet (sws) is presenting is concocted by him; but to strike his awe in their hearts, he is ascribing it to God.

Thirdly, the objection that if these people are worthy of punishment because of straying into error, why are their circumstances better than those of the Prophet (sws) and of his companions, and why does not the punishment with which they are being threatened with come?

Readers may study the succeeding verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اَمۡ لَهُمۡ شُرَكٰٓؤُا شَرَعُوۡا لَهُمۡ مِّنَ الدِّيۡنِ مَا لَمۡ يَاۡذَنۡۢ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوۡلَا كَلِمَةُ الۡفَصۡلِ لَقُضِىَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ ؕ وَاِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ
اَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۲۱﴾ تَرَى الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ مُشۡفِقِيۡنَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوۡا وَهُوَ وَاقِعٌۢ بِهِمۡ ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فِىۡ رَوۡضٰتِ الۡجَنّٰتِ ۚ لَهُمۡ
مَّا يَشَآءُوۡنَ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الۡفَضۡلُ الۡكَبِيۡرُ ﴿۲۲﴾ ذٰلِكَ الَّذِىۡ يُبَشِّرُ اللّٰهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ؕ
قُلۡ لَّاۤ اَسۡـَٔـلُكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ اَجۡرًا اِلَّا الۡمَوَدَّةَ فِى الۡقُرۡبٰى ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّقۡتَرِفۡ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدۡ لَهٗ فِيۡهَا حُسۡنًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ شَكُوۡرٌ ﴿۲۳﴾ اَمۡ
يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ افۡتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ۚ فَاِنۡ يَّشَاِ اللّٰهُ يَخۡتِمۡ عَلٰى قَلۡبِكَ ؕ وَيَمۡحُ اللّٰهُ الۡبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الۡحَقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيۡمٌۢ
بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوۡرِ ﴿۲۴﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡ يَقۡبَلُ التَّوۡبَةَ عَنۡ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَعۡفُوۡا عَنِ السَّيِّاٰتِ وَيَعۡلَمُ مَا تَفۡعَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَيَسۡتَجِيۡبُ
الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَيَزِيۡدُهُمۡ مِّنۡ فَضۡلِهٖ ؕ وَالۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ شَدِيۡدٌ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَلَوۡ بَسَطَ اللّٰهُ الرِّزۡقَ لِعِبَادِهٖ
لَبَغَوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَلٰكِنۡ يُّنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِعِبَادِهٖ خَبِيۡرٌۢ بَصِيۡرٌ ﴿۲۷﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡ يُنَزِّلُ الۡغَيۡثَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا قَنَطُوۡا وَ
يَنۡشُرُ رَحۡمَتَهٗ ؕ وَهُوَ الۡوَلِىُّ الۡحَمِيۡدُ ﴿۲۸﴾ وَمِنۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ خَلۡقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيۡهِمَا مِنۡ دَآبَّةٍ ؕ وَهُوَ عَلٰى جَمۡعِهِمۡ
اِذَا يَشَآءُ قَدِيۡرٌ ﴿۲۹﴾ وَمَاۤ اَصَابَكُمۡ مِّنۡ مُّصِيۡبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتۡ اَيۡدِيۡكُمۡ وَيَعۡفُوۡا عَنۡ كَثِيۡرٍ ﴿۳۰﴾ وَمَاۤ اَنۡتُمۡ بِمُعۡجِزِيۡنَ فِى
الۡاَرۡضِ ۖ وَمَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ وَّلِىٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيۡرٍ ﴿۳۱﴾ وَمِنۡ اٰيٰتِهِ الۡجَوَارِ فِى الۡبَحۡرِ كَالۡاَعۡلَامِ ﴿۳۲﴾ اِنۡ يَّشَاۡ يُسۡكِنِ الرِّيۡحَ
فَيَظۡلَلۡنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلٰى ظَهۡرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوۡرٍ ﴿۳۳﴾ اَوۡ يُوۡبِقۡهُنَّ بِمَا كَسَبُوۡا وَيَعۡفُ عَنۡ كَثِيۡرٍ ﴿۳۴﴾ وَّيَعۡلَمَ
الَّذِيۡنَ يُجَادِلُوۡنَ فِىۡۤ اٰيٰتِنَا ؕ مَا لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ مَّحِيۡصٍ ﴿۳۵﴾ فَمَاۤ اُوۡتِيۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ شَىۡءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ۚ وَمَا عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ خَيۡرٌ وَّ
اَبۡقٰى لِلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمۡ يَتَوَكَّلُوۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾

Have they some partners of God who have prescribed for them the religion which

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God has not allowed? And had the time of the decision not been determined, their matter would have been decided. And indeed for these wrongdoers is a painful doom. You shall behold the wrongdoers aghast on that day at the torment of their earning and it will surely smite them. However, those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds shall dwell in the orchards of Paradise. For them shall be from their Lord all that they desire. Surely this will be the greatest blessing. This is the thing whose glad tidings God is giving to those of His servants who embraced faith and did righteous deeds. Say: "For this I demand of you no recompense; I am only fulfilling my obligation towards my close relationships." And if any person does a good deed, We shall increase its goodness. Indeed. God is very forgiving and bountiful in His rewards. (21-23)

Do they say: "He has framed a falsehood about God?" So if God desires, He can put a seal on your heart, and through His words, God obliterates evil and strengthens the truth. Indeed, He knows the secrets of hearts and He alone accepts the repentance of His servants, and pardons their sins. And is aware of what you do. (24-25)

And those embraced faith and did righteous deeds accept and He will give them more through His bounty. As for these disbelievers, there is a grievous punishment for them. (26)

And had God bestowed abundant provisions upon His servants, they would have wreaked havoc in the land. But He sends down in a certain measure what He desires; He is aware of His servants and observes them, and He it is Who sends down the rain when people have lost all hope, and spreads His mercy. And He alone is the real accomplisher and has worthy attributes. (27-28)

And from among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and animals He has dispersed between them. And He is also powerful enough to gather them whenever He wants to. (29)

And whatever misfortune befalls you, it is the fruit of your own deeds, and He forgives many of your sins. And neither can you escape in the earth from God's grasp [nor in the heavens] and there will be none besides God who can be your accomplisher or helper. (30-31)

And among His signs are the ships which sail like mountains on the seas, and if He wants He can stop the wind so that they stand stationary at sea level. Indeed, there are signs in this for every person who shows perseverance and gratitude. Or He destroys them because of their misdeeds and forgives many and so that those who are indulging in baseless arguments about Our revelations come to know that there is no place for them to escape. (32-35)

Thus whatever has been given to you is a trivial provision of this life, and whatever is with God is better and more enduring for those who embraced faith and put their trust in God. (36)

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Explanation

اَمۡ لَهُمۡ شُرَكٰٓؤُا شَرَعُوۡا لَهُمۡ مِّنَ الدِّيۡنِ مَا لَمۡ يَاۡذَنۡۢ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوۡلَا كَلِمَةُ الۡفَصۡلِ لَقُضِىَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ ؕ وَاِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۲۱﴾[22]

The particle أَمْ here is to express amazement and wonder. The implication is that the religion of God which He sent with all His prophets and messengers is the one which is mentioned above; so from where has this new religion arrived? Do they have some associates who have fabricated a religion for them which was not permitted by God. In other words, without the permission of God, no religion can be classified as the religion of God, so where has this religion come from? If they have some associates, then God has no associates. It is merely a baseless notion that they have.

What is expressed in وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ is already mentioned in verse 14 above. These words sound a threat to them that had not the Almighty fixed a time to decide their fate, they would have been destroyed right away in this very world; the respite they have been given should not induce them to arrogance; in fact, they should show gratitude to God that He is not seizing them immediately. If they do not benefit from this time, then they should remember that for such wrong-doers there is a painful torment. The word الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ refers to the idolaters who had left the religion of God and had invented the new religion of polytheism and in this way were responsible for wronging their souls by their own hands.

تَرَى الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ مُشۡفِقِيۡنَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوۡا وَهُوَ وَاقِعٌۢ بِهِمۡ ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فِىۡ رَوۡضٰتِ الۡجَنّٰتِ ۚ لَهُمۡ مَّا يَشَآءُوۡنَ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الۡفَضۡلُ الۡكَبِيۡرُ ﴿۲۲﴾[23]

The verse implies that today these idolaters have no fear of the Hereafter on the basis of their alleged deities; they think that in case the Hereafter comes, their deities will help them; they need not worry; however, when the Hereafter comes, they will see that at that time there is no one to intercede or help them; every person will face his deeds; people will fear the consequences of these deeds but this fear at that time will be of no avail. They will definitely face the punishment of their deeds and no scheming of theirs will help them out from it.

The next part of the verse beginning from وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا says that those who led their

22. Have they some partners of God who have prescribed for them the religion which God has not allowed? And had the time of the decision not been determined, their matter would have been decided. And indeed for these wrongdoers is a painful doom.

23. You shall behold the wrongdoers aghast on that day at the torment of their earning and it will surely smite them. However, those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds shall dwell in the orchards of Paradise. For them shall be from their Lord all that they desire. Surely this will be the greatest blessing.

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lives having faith and doing good deeds instead of depending on their deities will find themselves in orchards of Paradise. For them, from God will be everything which they want.

In the expression رَوْضٰتِ الْجَنّٰتِ, the word رَوْضٰتِ refers to the supplementary orchards and lawns which will be found in the vast Paradise of God for the entertainment of the dwellers of Paradise. Since there will be more than one orchard and more than one Paradise, both words in Arabic occur in the plural.

In order to understand the true stress of the words ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيْرُ readers may take a look at verse 20 above. It is said there that the slaves of this word regard their pleasures and indulgences to be very great; the fact of the matter is that the real blessing which people should be after is the one which God will grant His servants on the Day of Judgement.

ذٰلِكَ الَّذِیْ یُبَشِّرُ اللّٰهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ؕ قُلْ لَّاۤ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَیْهِ اَجْرًا اِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِی الْقُرْبٰی ؕ وَ مَنْ یَّقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهٗ فِیْهَا حُسْنًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ شَكُوْرٌ ﴿۲۳﴾[24]

This verse explains the great blessing referred to in the previous verse: since the Almighty is giving the believers the glad tidings of an eternal kingdom, they should expend their effort to achieve it and should leave those people alone to themselves who have become slaves to the paltry pleasures of this world.

The exception in اِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِی الْقُرْبٰی in my opinion is severed (*munqaṭa'*) and the word قُرْبٰی is a verbal noun the way زُلْفٰی and بُشْرٰی are and which have the same grammatical form (*wazan*).

The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should inform the megalomaniac leaders of the Quraysh that in spite of all their apathy, aversion and harassment if he is diligently presenting his message to them, then they should not think that he has some personal gain in this endeavour. How can he for whom the Almighty has given such glad tidings of a great blessing – as mentioned in the previous verse – need any reward from them? All his endeavours and anxieties are because he wants to fulfill the obligation which is imposed on him as a result of being part of a clan and tribe and by virtue of which he is related to them; they are members of his family and nation; hence it is his obligation towards them that the guidance he has brought from God be first delivered to them and the mercy he is proclaiming for all should first of all be extended to them by his efforts.

It may be kept in mind that it has always remained the established practice of the prophets of God that they begin their preaching by first addressing the members of their respective tribes and nations and until they lost hope from them, they do not direct their

24. This is the thing whose glad tidings God is giving to those of His servants who embraced faith and did righteous deeds. Say: "For this I demand of you no recompense; I am only fulfilling my obligation towards my close relationships." And if any person does a good deed, We shall increase its goodness. Indeed. God is very forgiving and bountiful in His rewards.

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attention to others. It was a result of this practice that the Prophet (sws) was initially directed by the words: وَ اَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ (٢٦:٢١٤) (and inform your near of kin, (26:214)). It was his close relatives among the Quraysh who were the political and religious leaders of Arabia. The Prophet (sws) began his preaching mission by sounding a warning to them about the Hereafter, and in spite of all their excesses continued with this task until they made him lose hope because of their stubbornness. When the situation reached the extent that they started to conspire to kill him, it is then when the Almighty directed him to migrate from them to Madīnah.

My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī views this verse differently. He is of the opinion that the exception is in the meaning of emendation (*iṣtidrāk*) and interprets this verse in the light of the following verse of Sūrah Sabā': قُلْ مَا سَاَلْتُكُمْ مِّنْ اَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ (٣٤:٤٧)(Tell them: "If I have demanded any reward from you, then it is for you; my reward rests with God," (34:47)). In his opinion, the meaning is that if the Prophet (sws) is calling them to fulfill the rights imposed by blood relationships and to spend in way of God, then it is not because he has some selfish motive behind it; it is for their own benefit of this world and the next; this wealth shall be taken from their affluent and distributed among their poor, and in this manner, he is showing them the way of how to care for close relatives; there is no personal benefit for him in this.

It may be kept in mind that the Prophet (sws) did not allow himself or his relatives to benefit from the *zakāh* money in any way so that no chance remains of making evil estimations.

Both these interpretations are not very different from one another. This is because a severed exception and emendation are very similar in nature; however, there is some difference between the two. Although I am convinced of my own interpretation, I do not regard my mentor's interpretation to be incorrect.

In my opinion, the correct interpretation of the verse is the one which is stated in the afore-mentioned paragraphs. Generally, people have interpreted this verse to mean that the Prophet is stating: "I do not need any reward from you; I only want that you deal kindly with me on the basis of the close familial relationship between me and you." The weakness of this interpretation is obvious; to ask for being dealt with kindly is no less than asking for a type of reward, and in Sūrah al-Shu'arā' it is unanimously stated from the tongue of all the Prophets of God like Noah (sws), Hūd (sws), Ṣālih (sws), Lot (sws) and Shu'ayb (sws): وَمَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ. (٢٦:١٠٩) (I do not ask any reward from you for anything; my reward rests with God alone, (26:109)). No prophet has appealed to his respective nation to be dealt with kindly in return for his preaching because the whole dispute was about this preaching; so when a prophet did not have the liberty to strike a compromise in it, what is the meaning of appealing to the adversaries for kind treatment. The animosity of the Quraysh with the Prophet (sws) was because of his preaching; they were ready to fulfill every desire of his and obey every directive of his if the Prophet (sws) would desist from his

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preaching of *tawḥīd*. However, the Prophet (sws) openly declared that he will not desist from this effort. After this, when the attitude of the Quraysh became even from stern, the Prophet (sws) instead of requesting them to treat him kindly, openly told them that whatever they want to do they should carry on with it; if he is given as much gold as the mountain of Uḥud, he will not desist from his preaching.

Some misled sects have interpreted this verse to mean: "The only reward I ask you is to love my relatives." This interpretation is totally against the words of the verse, some other verses as well as sense and reason. Once the true interpretation of the verse has become evident, this interpretation does not need any refutation. Those who are its proponents perhaps do not remember that this verse belongs to the Makkan period when most of the Prophet's near relatives were after his life; so what is the point in appealing to people to love them.

The words وَ مَنۡ يَّقۡتَرِفۡ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدۡ لَهٗ فِيۡهَا حُسۡنًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ شَكُوۡرٌ imply that the Prophet (sws) should inform these people that their piety and virtue is no benefit to God so that if they do not serve and worship Him, then something will go wrong in His kingdom; on the contrary, their piety and virtue will only benefit them because whatever small or big good deed they do, God will increase and reinforce it, and they will receive its reward in the form of an eternal kingdom. God is ever disposed to forgiveness and has great regard for good deeds; He will not ignore the minutest of good deeds; in fact, He will increase it by nurturing and bestow it on His servants in the form of great reward.

اَمۡ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ افۡتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ۚ فَاِنۡ يَّشَاِ اللّٰهُ يَخۡتِمۡ عَلٰى قَلۡبِكَ ؕ وَيَمۡحُ اللّٰهُ الۡبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الۡحَقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوۡرِ ﴿۲۴﴾[25]

The verse implies that if they have worked up this mischief against this scale of justice – ie Qur'ān – that it has been fabricated by the Prophet (sws) and that only to over-awe people he has ascribed it to God, then this should be enough to satisfy them that he has received the Qur'ān neither of his own desire nor can he receive it of his own desire; it is the Almighty Who has bestowed him with this fountain of graciousness, and whenever He wants He can stop its flow. This topic is mentioned in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl in the following words:

وَلَئِنۡ شِئۡنَا لَنَذۡهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِىۡۤ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ بِهٖ عَلَيۡنَا وَكِيۡلًا. اِلَّا رَحۡمَةً مِّنۡ رَّبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّ فَضۡلَهٗ كَانَ عَلَيۡكَ كَبِيۡرًا. (۱۷: ۸۶-۸۷)

If it were Our Will, We could take away that which We have sent to you as

25. Do they say: "He has framed a falsehood about God?" So if God desires, He can put a seal on your heart, and through His words, God obliterates evil and strengthens the truth. Indeed, He knows the secrets of hearts.

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revelation. Then you will not be able to make anyone help you against Us in returning it. This is merely a blessing of your Lord to you. Indeed great is His mercy on you. (17:86-87)

In the section وَيَمْحُ اللّٰهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ the sentence is of the nature of an accusative of state, and the word يَمْحُ is not co-ordinated to يَخْتِمْ; it is an independent sentence. And it is in fact يَمْحُو from which a و has been dropped the way it is in the expressions: وَ سَنَدْعُ الزَّبَانِيَةَ (٩٦:١٨) and يَدْعُ الْاِنْسَانُ (١٧:١١).

This section of the verse is in fact another aspect of what is said previously: do those who regard the Qur'ān to be a fabrication of Muḥammad (sws) not see the effect that how God through His words is obliterating evil and affirming the truth? Fabrication is always from Satan, and Satan is not one who obliterates evil and reinforces the truth; in fact, he does the absolute reverse. Jesus (sws) too, in very similar words, has responded to the objection of those people who blamed him by saying: "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons," (Matthew, 12:24)). His reply was: "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?" (Matthew, 12:26)). The same thing is said in this verse: if the Qur'ān is a fabrication, and its presenter is a fabricator then the consequence of this should not be that falsehood should perish and evil should thrive; it should have been totally opposite. Has a fabricator ever presented a discourse as beneficial and as radiant for the souls and hearts as the Qur'ān?

The words اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ are a warning to those people who were regarding the Qur'ān to be a fabrication and the Prophet (sws) to be a fabricator. It is obvious that those who had worked this mischief fully knew that neither is the Qur'ān a fabrication nor is its presenter a fabricator; they were also fully aware of the loftiness of the Qur'ān as well as of the lofty character of the Prophet (sws). They fully comprehended that the Qur'ān is true and its presenter as an unblemished individual; however, since they did not want to accept the Qur'ān as the Book of God and Muḥammad (sws) as the Messenger of God, they would spread such false and baseless propaganda. It is while referring to this state of theirs that they are threatened that God fully knows the secrets of their hearts; He is aware what is in their hearts and what they say from their tongues.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَعْفُوْا عَنِ السَّيِّاٰتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾[26]

These words urge these people to repent and mend their ways: they still have the opportunity to save themselves from the wrath of God if they do so. God is ever-merciful and forgoes the sins of His servants. If they do not pay heed to this call, they

26. And He alone accepts the repentance of His servants, and pardons their sins. And is aware of what you do.

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should remember that whatever they do is in His knowledge; they will not be able to hide any of their sins from Him.

وَيَسْتَجِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ وَالْكٰفِرُوْنَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ﴿٢٦﴾[27]

The attitude of the believers and their fate is depicted in this verse: the way they responded to this call and as a result of which they will be blessed with more favours in this world and the next, in the same way, if these people want, they can become worthy of these favours otherwise they should remember that God has prepared a painful torment for the disbelievers. The words الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا are not in the place of an object (*maf'ūl*); they are in the place of a subject (*fā'il*). At another place, the words are: اِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْمَعُوْنَ ؕ وَالْمَوْتٰى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ. (٣٦:٦) (only they will accept it who really lend ear; as for those whose hearts are dead, God will raise them …, (6:36)).

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللّٰهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهٖ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلٰكِنْ يُّنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِعِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٢٧﴾[28]

The verse implies that if their worldly affluence and riches have led them to believe that they are on the right path, and as a result have been inflicted with such arrogance that they are not properly responding to the calls of the Prophet (sws) and his not well-off companions, then they are merely deceiving their own selves. Worldly affluence is not a testimony to a person being on the right path. Such things are meant to try and test people, and it is God who gives both believers and disbelievers this affluence as per His wisdom and expedience, and in this manner tries them both. All this is in the authority of God. He is fully aware of the circumstances and expedient needs of His servants. For this reason, He limits these riches to whomsoever He wants and gives them in abundance to whomsoever He wants and in this manner tests them if they remain patient and grateful. Had He intended, He could have blessed each person with abundance of riches so that they could benefit from them at will; however, such a situation would have become a great trial for people. They would have taken the path of rebellion while being inebriated with this affluence. To save people from such a trial, the Almighty has kept the whole matter in His own hands. He gives to people whatever livelihood and sustenance He wants to in accordance with His wisdom. Thus if a person is given in abundance, he should not out of arrogance think that this is the result of his own planning and ability or the share of his forefathers; he should remain grateful to God Who has the authority to give and also to take away after giving.

This subject is discussed in more detail in the succeeding *sūrah*: Sūrah al-Zukhruf

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27. And those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds accept and He will give them more through His bounty. As for these disbelievers, there is a grievous punishment for them.

28. And had God bestowed abundant provisions upon His servants, they would have wreaked havoc in the land. But He sends down in a certain measure what He desires; He is aware of His servants and observes them,

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which is the counterpart of this *sūrah*:

وَ قَالُوْا لَوْ لَا نُزِّلَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيْمٍ. اَهُمْ يَقْسِمُوْنَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ ؕ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيْشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ رَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا ؕ وَ رَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ. وَ لَوْلَآ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَّكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ لِبُيُوْتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ وَّ مَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُوْنَ. وَ لِبُيُوْتِهِمْ اَبْوَابًا وَّ سُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَّكِئُوْنَ. وَ زُخْرُفًا ؕ وَ اِنْ كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَ الْاٰخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ. (٤٣: ٣١-٣٥)

And they ask: "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed to some big leader of the two cities – Makkah or Ṭā'if?" Is it they who apportion your Lord's blessings? We have allocated among them their livelihood in this world and have raised some in status above others so that they can mutually serve each other. And better is your Lord's mercy than what they are amassing. Had it not been for the fact that people might have adopted one path, We would have made the house roofs of those who have rejected the Most Gracious Lord of silver and their stairways also which they climb and also their doors and their couches on which they recline. And We could have made these into gold as well. And these things are only provisions of the few days of this worldly life and the success in the life to come is reserved by your Lord for the virtuous. (43:33-35)

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوْا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهٗ ؕ وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿٢٨﴾[29]

This is a substantiation of what is said above that God sends down sustenance for His servants in a measure; neither do His servants have a say in this nor their alleged deities. The verse states that it is God Who sends down rain after people totally lose hope. Rain is specially mentioned because livelihood totally depends on it. The words مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوْا are meant to highlight the reality that all those who are very proud of their planning, of their deities and intercessors as well as their means and resources and think that they deserve what they have are fully aware of the fact that sending down rain from the blocked crevices of the sky is only in the hands of the Almighty. In other words, God shows this majesty of His from time to time so that no one should become arrogant enough to claim that sustenance is the right of someone or that someone other than God is a source of it.

The words وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ summarize the whole subject under discussion: this every day observation shows that the real accomplisher is God and He is الْحَمِيْدُ ie. is also worthy of all good attributes and the fountainhead of all praises and gratitude. He does not deprive

29. And He it is Who sends down the rain when people have lost all hope, and spreads His mercy. And He alone is the real accomplisher and has worthy attributes.

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in these few days of worldly life people who thrive on his sustenance and even challenge Him.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ خَلْقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيْهِمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ ؕ وَهُوَ عَلٰى جَمْعِهِمْ اِذَا يَشَآءُ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۲۹﴾[30]

The verse implies that no one should remain under the misconception that the threat of the Day of Judgement is a bluff; the God Who has created the heavens and the earth is even more capable of recreating man. At another place, this subject is discussed thus: ءَاَنْتُمْ اَشَدُّ خَلْقًا اَمِ السَّمَآءُ ۚ بَنٰٮهَا. (٢٧:٧٩) (is creating you more difficult or the sky which was raised aloft, (79:27)).

The word دَآبَّةٍ is used for living beings which inhabit the earth; for this reason, a question may arise in the mind: there may be some creatures in the sky also on which this word is applicable; if this is not so, why is the dual antecedent used in the word فِيْهِمَا. The answer to this question is that just as the word سماء is used for the sky, it is also used for the atmosphere in which birds fly.

The contrasting use of the words بَثَّ and جَمْع here bespeaks of eloquence and is also a very effective argument of the Day of Judgement. The former means "to scatter" and "to spread," and the latter "to gather" and "to bring together." It is evident from this that He Who has scattered all these living beings in the heavens and the earth is powerful enough to gather them whenever He wants to. When He has the power to scatter them, why will He not have the power to gather them? Every farmer who sows seeds in his land does not scatter seeds in it to waste them; he gathers their produce one day and for this he is least burdened.

وَمَآ اَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَيَعْفُوْا عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ ﴿۳۰﴾ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۖ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِىٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ﴿۳۱﴾[31]

These verses quell from another angle the doubt raised above. It is said that people can experience God's law of reward and punishment in their daily lives. Whatever sorrows people are afflicted with in this world are because of their own deeds even though God forgoes many of them. These sorrows afflict them to warn and remind them so that they should not regard this life to be a playground of kids and lead an indifferent life; these admonishing incidents should make them realize that the Creator of these incidents is one Who rewards and punishes and He will definitely gather them

30. And from among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and animals He has dispersed between them. And He is also powerful enough to gather them whenever He wants to.

31. And whatever misfortune befalls you, it is the fruit of your own deeds, and He forgives many of your sins. And neither can you escape in the earth from God's grasp [nor in the heavens] and there will be none besides God who can be your accomplisher or helper.

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one day and hold them accountable; if today He is giving them respite, it is not because He is not concerned with their good and evil or that He has regarded their evil to be of the same status as good; the real reason is that He has appointed a day to mete out complete reward and punishment which is bound to come.

The word يَعْفُوْا in وَ يَعْفُوْا عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ is means "to overlook." It is used in this meaning at many instances in the Qur'ān.

The section وَ مَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ points to the fact that people see from their very eyes that when the Almighty sends a calamity on them, they are not able to escape from it nor does any of their helper or supporter able to support or defend them in any way. This is an evidence of the fact that in the heavens also on the Day of Judgement no deity or intercessor nor any helper or supporter will be able to protect them from the grasp of God.

Here, it must be understood, that the addressees are the disbelievers, who are inflicted with calamities in this world because of their deeds. It can be inferred from this that the Creator is One Who rewards and punishes. Hence, He will definitely bring about a day in which He will punish the disbeliever for those of their misdeeds which He is ignoring in this world. This verse does not relate to the prophets of God, the truthful and the righteous. The calamities which they are inflicted with are not because of their deeds but to try and test them. The purpose is to test their patience, and this trial become a means of enhancing their status.

وَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِهِ الْجَوَارِ فِى الْبَحْرِ كَالْاَعْلَامِ ﴿٣٢﴾ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيْحَ فَيَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلٰى ظَهْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ اَوْ يُوْبِقْهُنَّ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا وَ يَعْفُ عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَّ يَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِىْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا ؕ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّحِيْصٍ ﴿٣٥﴾[32]

These verses present an example before those people who are deeply engrossed in their worldly success: they should consider this worldly life to be a sea voyage. It is the result of God's power and wisdom that ships as heavy as the mountains sail in the sea. Those who do not have an eye for the power and might of God think that there is no danger to the ship when they see it cruising about and think that how can there be any danger to it. The fact is that if God wants, He can stop the wind and these ships together leaving their passengers are stranded in the sea. He can even make these ships and their ships drown in the sea with no one to be able to save them. Though this parable relates to ships which have sails because till that time only such ships had been invented, however, this same parable can precisely relate to the modern day ships as well. Today the advancements of science have taught man how to harness steam,

32. And among His signs are the ships which sail like mountains on the seas, and if He wants He can stop the wind so that they stand stationary at the sea level. Indeed, there are signs in this for every person who shows perseverance and gratitude. Or He destroys them because of their misdeeds and forgives many and so that those who are indulging in baseless arguments about Our revelations come to know that there is no place for them to escape.

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electricity and the atom which has increased his might a lot. However, even today every now and then we read about various sea ships drowning in the sea like tablets of aspirin dissolving in water or their machinery going out of order down so that their lifeless structure has to be dragged to the shore by other ships.

The words اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ refer to the lesson which is concealed in this parable. They say that those who are patient and grateful will find many a lesson in it. They are the ones who seriously reflect on the circumstances and incidents of this life and conclude from them that if a person is facing adverse circumstances, he should not despair and lose hope; on the contrary, he should show patience by trusting his Lord. Whatever happens in this world happens at the behest of God, and no act of God is devoid of wisdom. Similarly, if a person encounters conducive circumstances, he should not show arrogance and conceit; on the contrary, he should continue to be grateful because whatever a person receives, he receives from God, and just as God has the power to give, He also has the power to take away. People who are not aware of this reality become arrogant when they receive favours and frustrated when they adverse circumstances befall them. They never become aware of the sweetness of faith. Further ahead in this *sūrah*, such people are mentioned in the following words: وَ اِنَّاۤ اِذَاۤ اَذَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ بِهَا ۚ وَ اِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَیِّئَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَیْدِیْهِمْ فَاِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ كَفُوْرٌ (٤٢:٤٨) (and when We bless man with Our favours, he becomes arrogant and if some calamity afflicts him because of his deeds, he becomes ungrateful, (42:48)).

The sentence اِنْ یَّشَاْ یُسْكِنِ الرِّیْحَ فَیَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلٰی is co-ordinated to اَوْ یُوْبِقْهُنَّ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا وَ یَعْفُ عَنْ كَثِیْرٍ ظَهْرِهٖ. The sentence اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ is a parenthetical one and is meant to point to the objective of this parable. Once the parenthetical sentence ends, the discourse was completed by stating that just as God has the power to stop the wind and leave the ships static on the surface of the sea, He also has the power to drown its passengers because of their misdeeds, and if He wants He can forgo the sins of many of them and they come out of the whirlpool and are safely transported to the shore. He has the power to exercise any of these three options. Hence it is not right for any person in this world to become proud of his success. On the other hand, if he is successful, he should become grateful to God. And if he is faced with a calamity, he should regard it to be the consequence of some blemish of his and show patience and hope for the best from God.

The word یَعْلَمَ in وَّ یَعْلَمَ الَّذِیْنَ یُجَادِلُوْنَ فِیْۤ اٰیٰتِنَا ؕ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّحِیْصٍ is in the accusative. For this reason, its co-ordinated sentence must be regarded as suppressed. Several examples of such suppression can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* and are coming up in the succeeding ones as well. For example, it is said in Sūrah al-Jāthiyah: وَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَ لِتُجْزٰی كُلُّ نَفْسٍۭ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ (٤٥:٢٢) (and God has created the heavens and the earth with a purpose and so that each soul be recompensed according to what it did, (45:22)). On this principle, some appropriate causation will be considered to have been suppressed here. Thus the whole discourse would be something to the effect: so that

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God takes revenge from them and so that those who do hair-splitting regarding the revelations of God become aware of the reality that they have no place to run from God.

This topic is discussed in various styles in the Qur'ān. Here is an example from Sūrah Yūnus:

هُوَ الَّذِیۡ یُسَیِّرُکُمۡ فِی الۡبَرِّ وَ الۡبَحۡرِ ؕ حَتّٰۤی اِذَا کُنۡتُمۡ فِی الۡفُلۡکِ ۚ وَ جَرَیۡنَ بِهِمۡ بِرِیۡحٍ طَیِّبَةٍ وَّ فَرِحُوۡا بِهَا جَآءَتۡهَا رِیۡحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَّ جَآءَهُمُ الۡمَوۡجُ مِنۡ کُلِّ مَکَانٍ وَّ ظَنُّوۡۤا اَنَّهُمۡ اُحِیۡطَ بِهِمۡ ۙ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخۡلِصِیۡنَ لَهُ الدِّیۡنَ ۚ لَئِنۡ اَنۡجَیۡتَنَا مِنۡ هٰذِهٖ لَنَکُوۡنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰکِرِیۡنَ. فَلَمَّاۤ اَنۡجٰىهُمۡ اِذَا هُمۡ یَبۡغُوۡنَ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ بِغَیۡرِ الۡحَقِّ ؕ یٰۤاَیُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّمَا بَغۡیُکُمۡ عَلٰۤی اَنۡفُسِکُمۡ ۙ مَّتَاعَ الۡحَیٰوةِ الدُّنۡیَا ۫ ثُمَّ اِلَیۡنَا مَرۡجِعُکُمۡ فَنُنَبِّئُکُمۡ بِمَا کُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ. (۱۰: ۲۲-۲۳)

He is the One Who enables you to travel through land and sea until when you board the ships, and they set sail with the favourable wind and they are engrossed, a violent wind overtakes them and waves surge towards them from all sides and they start thinking that they will now be destroyed. At that time, they call out to God making a promise to sincerely obey Him: if You deliver us from this destruction, We will be Your grateful servants. But when He delivers them, they become rebellious in the land without any right. O People! The evil consequences of your rebellion will be coming upon you. Gain some benefit from the fleeting provisions of this worldly life but ultimately you have to return to Us. Then We will let you know what you had been doing. (10:22-23)

فَمَاۤ اُوۡتِیۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ شَیۡءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الۡحَیٰوةِ الدُّنۡیَا ۚ وَ مَا عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ خَیۡرٌ وَّ اَبۡقٰی لِلَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَلٰی رَبِّهِمۡ یَتَوَکَّلُوۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾[33]

Here at the end, the aforementioned discussion is summarized: these worldly riches and favours which they have been given are not something to feel proud and conceited of; they are provisions of this fleeting life. One day at last this life will end and so will its provisions. However, whatever lies in the Hereafter with God is better then these provisions and also eternal. It is reserved for those who embrace faith and repose their trust in God. The implication is that if they have the grit, they should be desirous of the Hereafter; why are they destroying their future by going after these paltry provisions.

The words وَ عَلٰی رَبِّهِمۡ یَتَوَکَّلُوۡنَ are specially worth noting. They point to the fact that for those people who are desirous of the eternal kingdom of the Hereafter, the real provision for their journey is trust in God. Unless a person, while relying on God and depending upon the reward of the Hereafter, has the courage to sever all those things from him which are an impediment to tread in the path of God he or anyone else

33. Thus whatever has been given to you is a trivial provision of this life, and whatever is with God is better and more enduring for those who embraced faith and put their trust in God.

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cannot attain this kingdom.

Section IV: Verses (37-43)

In the succeeding verses, some more traits of the people, who are worthy of the aforementioned reward, are mentioned. It is evident from these traits that those Muslims who had become the target of all kinds of oppression from the arrogant Quraysh, so much so, were being compelled to leave their homes because of this oppression are in fact worthy of this reward. This *sūrah*, as is indicated earlier, was revealed very near the migration to Madīnah. For this reason, these traits are mentioned in a style which insinuates glad tidings of victory for the Muslims and which also gives certain important instructions regarding their obligations in the coming times. Thus, before migration they were told that till then, they were in the form of a dispersed lot; but now the Almighty is creating a situation in which they will be politically organized as a community; till then they were oppressed; but now the time is approaching when they will be able to acquire the force to defend themselves and would also be permitted to do so from God. These verses guide the Muslims about what they should do in these circumstances when they arise; however, this guidance is not in the garb of a directive; it is stated as an obvious consequence of faith and trust in God. In the light of this background, readers may proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَ الَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبٰٓئِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَ الْفَوَاحِشَ وَ اِذَا مَا غَضِبُوْا هُمْ يَغْفِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَ اَقَامُوا
الصَّلٰوةَ ۪ وَ اَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ ۪ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۹﴾ وَ جَزٰٓؤُا
سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا ۚ فَمَنْ عَفَا وَ اَصْلَحَ فَاَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۴۰﴾ وَ لَمَنِ انْتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ
مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿۴۱﴾ اِنَّمَا السَّبِيْلُ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَظْلِمُوْنَ النَّاسَ وَ يَبْغُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۴۲﴾ وَ لَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَ غَفَرَ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۴۳﴾

And those who avoid grievous sins and lewd acts and forgive when angry and those who responded to the call of their Lord, were diligent in their prayer and conduct their affairs by mutual consultation and spend from the provisions We have given them. (37-38)

And those who take revenge only when excess is committed against them. And the reward of a sin is an act equal to it. But he who forgave and made amends, then his reward rests with God. God does not like the wrongdoers. And those who take revenge after being wronged incur no blame. Blame is on those who are unjust and are

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rebellious in the land without any right. It is these people for whom there is a woeful torment. (39-42)

And he who showed patience and forgave, then this is indeed from among lofty traits. (43)

Explanation

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبٰٓئِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَاِذَا مَا غَضِبُوْا هُمْ يَغْفِرُوْنَ ۝[34]

The verse says that these people are not like ones who after receiving the favours of God resorted to oppression, lewdness, and rebelliousness. They are the ones who abstain from all sins related to usurping rights, lewdness, anger and revenge. The sarcasm this style holds for the opposite group does not need any mention. A little deliberation will show that here all sins have been comprehensively stated under three heads: *ithm*, *faḥshā'* and *ghaḍab*. The first of these refers to sins which relate to usurpation of rights, oppression and injustice; the second of these refers to sins which relate to sex and base desires; the third of these comes into existence because of egotism, tyranny and arrogance and gives rise to rebelliousness and disorder, tyranny and coercion.

Here it is only mentioned that the greater manifestations of these sins be abstained from. There are two reasons for this: Firstly, man has been put into the trial of good and evil – which are two opposite phenomena. Hence, God does not require of him to live a sinless life; if he had been burdened with this obligation, it would have become unbearable for him. For this reason, God only wanted of him to abstain from bigger sins. If he keeps desisting from bigger sins, God will forgive his smaller ones. Secondly, the way a person can evade smaller sins is to abstain from bigger ones. If a person honestly keeps bigger trusts his conscience will never be happy to be dishonest in small things entrusted to him and bear the embarrassment of being called a dishonest person. Similarly, a person who protects himself from bigger sins will not like that he perpetrates smaller sins and ruin his reward. A person who desists from stealing gold coins will never be a stealer of pennies. If such an incident does take place, it would be inadvertent and not intentional. However, people who strain gnats often swallow camels.

The style of the words وَاِذَا مَا غَضِبُوْا هُمْ يَغْفِرُوْنَ indicates that as far as anger is concerned, such people do experience it because anger is a natural requisite of honour, integrity and self-esteem; however, they never lose control in this anger and become insane or exceed the bounds of God. They restrain themselves in this state and forgive those people who anger them yet because of different reasons deserve to be forgiven. Concealed in these words is an advice for the Muslims as well that even though the attitude of their enemies provokes their anger, yet it is better that they be ignored as for now until the truth is conclusively communicated to them. The succeeding verses will

34. And those who avoid grievous sins and lewd acts and forgive when angry.

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explain this aspect. The occurrence of the antecedent هُمْ here has lent emphasis in the sentence: although exercising such restrain is very difficult, yet very laudable are those people who patiently bear its brunt.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ۪ وَاَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ ۪ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾[35]

Mentioned in this verse are the traits of the believers as a result of which those qualities have been engendered in them which are referred to in the previous verse. The verse states that they are the ones who have positively responded to the call of their Lord which reached them through His messenger. Like the arrogant among the Quraysh, they did not try to deny it. This quality of theirs is referred to in verse 26 in the following words: وَيَسْتَجِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ (and those who have embraced faith and did righteous deeds are accepting it and He will give them more through His bounty).

The words وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ refer to their acceptance of their call or, in other words, their foremost manifestation of faith ie. they are diligent in their prayer. I have referred to this reality of religion at a number of places in this exegesis that the foremost practical manifestation of faith is the prayer. Not only is this so, other virtues too sprout from this and are nurtured through it. For this reason, he who was not diligent in the prayer, is as if he did not accept the call of faith. If he lays claim to faith, then this claim of his is tantamount to self-deception.

Here, it needs to be kept in mind that the term اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ does not mean to merely offer the prayer; it also means to make arrangements for it. In other words, these people pray themselves and also make arrangements for others to pray. It is offering this prayer and making arrangements for it to be offered by the collectivity which is their real distinctive feature in this world. It is this prayer which teaches them how to serve their Lord in this world and how to become a united force in adhering to the religion prescribed by Him. Moreover, it is this prayer which stops them from evil (*munkar*) and lewdness (*faḥshā'*). It is to this reality which the following Qur'ānic words allude: اِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ. (٢٩:٤٥) (the prayer deters [a person] from lewdness and evil, (29:45)). Here too there is a sarcasm found for the Quraysh: they ruined the prayer; but in spite of this claim to be the inheritors of the house built by Abraham (sws) which was actually built for the prayer and for making arrangement for the prayer.

Consider next the sentence: وَاَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ. The word شُوْرٰى is a verbal noun of the order of فتیا. In my opinion the word اَمْر is used in the Arabic language in very broad meanings. The actual meaning implied at an instance is determined through the

35. And those who responded to the call of their Lord, were diligent in their prayer and conduct their affairs by mutual consultation and spend from the provisions We have given them.

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occasion and context. Here an indication is present that tells us that it is used in the meaning of "collectivity." In other words, the political and collective system of the Muslims is not based on tyranny, egotism, tribal superiority, and racial vanity; on the contrary, it is based on the mutual consultation of the believers. The sarcasm this sentence holds for the collective and political system of the Quraysh does not need any elaboration because their collective system was totally based on tribal and racial bias. One of the big reasons for opposing Islam was that they saw in its penetration death for their system of *jāhiliyyah*. The Qur'ān here in this verse has on the one hand given glad tidings to the Muslims that the time has come to organize themselves as political collectivity and this political collectivity shall not be founded on tribal and racial bases but on mutual consultation. On the other hand, it has also tacitly conveyed to the leaders of the Quraysh that however much force they may expend in opposing Islam and the Muslims, yet through the very hands of these weak and oppressed Muslims that new system will be implanted by uprooting that old decrepit one.

Here space and occasion does not allow us to dwell deep into the characteristics and foundational principles of the *shūrā* system. I have already dealt in detail on this subject in one of the chapters of my book *Islāmī Riyāsat*[36] (The Islamic State). Those interested may look it up. However, one question is worthy of consideration here: as per the conventional style of the Qur'ān, *zakāh* or *infāq* (spending in the way of God) are mentioned after the prayer; however, here as against this conventional practice, *shūrā* is mentioned between the prayer and *infāq*. So what exactly is the importance of *shūrā* in accordance with which it is mentioned adjacent to the prayer?

In my opinion, the answer to this question is that the real spirit and form of the collective system of Islam is preserved in the prayer. It is in the prayer that Muslims are guided to stand as a united wall while worshipping the Almighty; it is in it that they are shown that the person who is the most knowledgeable and God-fearing among them who should lead them; similarly, the prayer highlights the fact that within the limits prescribed by God people must obey their leader without showing the slightest of hesitancy; it also bears witness to the fact that the *imām* (prayer leader) should not give any directive to people which is against the directive of God and His Prophet (sws); moreover, it also delineates that the most ordinary of followers has the right to correct the *imām* if he makes any mistake; so much so, even while praying if he commits the smallest of mistakes while offering the *rukū'* or prostration or doing the *qiyām* or reciting the Qur'ān, every person who prays behind him has the responsibility to correct him; at the same time, it is mandatory upon the *imām* to immediately correct himself if the correction is in accordance with the *sharī'ah*. In other words, the whole collective system is portrayed in the prayer and Muslims are shown to follow this example in their collective and political system. Similarly, in

36. See: Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Islāmī Riyāsat* (Lahore: Dār al-tadhkīr, 2006), 23-48. (*Translator*)

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order to implement their religion they should organize themselves and should select the most capable and the most knowledgeable and God-fearing person among themselves to lead them. Likewise, in everything which is in accordance with their religion they must obey him, and if something which is against the conventions of the *sharī'ah*, they must inform him without caring for the reproaches of any reproacher and try to reform him.

It is this relationship between the prayer and our political system that the Qur'ān at this very moment in which Muslims were being organized as a collectivity guided them towards *shūrā.* By mentioning *shūrā* adjacent to the prayer on the one hand, it highlighted its status in religion; on the other hand, the nature of organizational set-up was also explained viz: what will be the nature of rights and obligations of the ruler and the ruled; how people will be eligible to become its members; what will be their duties towards their collective system and towards their fellow human beings and before whom will they really be accountable to.

It was because of this relationship between importance of *shūrā* and the prayer that in the times of the Prophet (sws) and the Rightly Guided Caliphate, its sessions were held in the mosque. About 'Umar (rta) narratives even report that he would announce the holding of a session of *shūrā* by the words: الصَّلوٰة جامعة (Gather O members of *shūrā* for the prayer).[37] When the members of the *shūrā* would gather in the mosque, he offered two *rak'āt*. Obviously, when he would offer these *rak'āt*, the members of the *shūrā* too would have offered it behind him. After the prayer and supplications, 'Umar (rta) would table the agenda and the members of the *shūrā* would give their opinions on it, and under the direction of the caliph tried to reach a consensus in their opinions.

This method is also very blessed not only to obtain God's guidance but also with regard to the preservation of the real spirit of the political set-up envisaged by Islam. However, in current times, Muslims have abandoned this *shūrā* system and adopted other systems while following the footsteps of other nations and have severed their relationship with the mosque in this regard. The consequence is that they have been deprived of the guidance of God and their reins are now in the hands of Satan and his agents. The brawls and scuffles which now take place in the parliament are worse than the ones that take place in the market place.

Consider next the portion: وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ. I have discussed the relationship of the prayer with *zakāh* or *infāq* at a number of places in this exegesis. The first pillar of worshipping the Almighty is to pray to Him; the second pillar is to spend in His way from the sustenance He has blessed people with. The first of these strengthens a person's ties with His creator, and the second strengthens his ties with his fellow human beings, and on these two foundations stands the edifice of the *sharī'ah*.

37. 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 7, 330, (no. 13364).

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وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾[38]

The words of verse 37 earlier were: وَاِذَا مَا غَضِبُوْا هُمْ يَغْفِرُوْنَ. The current verse is a type of emendation to it: in the first place, these believers forgo the incitements of their opponents and if ever they retaliate, they do on a blatant excess committed against them. In other words, defence against an excess and avenging it is a right which every person has and he can use it; however, they do not use every thing to be an excuse to launch an offensive. On the contrary, if they avenge, they avenge a بَغْيُ which refers to an open excess, injustice and rebelliousness of an opponent.

وَجَزٰٓؤُا سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا ۚ فَمَنْ عَفَا وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾[39]

Moreover, the revenge of the believers is commensurate with the harm committed against them and they do not retaliate inequitably. Their revengeful measure is equal to the excess committed against them.

Any revengeful measure is not a sin; it is in fact *qiṣāṣ*. However, it is signified by the word سَيِّئَةٌ (evil) as per a linguistic style which has been explained at a number of places of this exegesis: at times, words are used in the capacity of *mujānasah* (literally: similarity of species). *Mujānasah* may be defined as the use of the same verb or noun in reply to some statement such that in this second instance of usage it is not used in its original meaning but used in a different meaning to which the context readily testifies. Thus the revenge of a سَيِّئَةٌ (evil) is not سَيِّئَةٌ (evil) in the actual sense. The second usage of the word سَيِّئَةٌ occurs only to employ the same word. It would actually mean that the revenge of an evil is an act commensurate to it. Other examples in Arabic include the expression دِنَّاهُمْ كَمَا دَانُوا (we paid them back in the same coins), the words كَمَا دَانُوا obviously mean كَمَا فَعَلُوا but merely for the sake of *mujānasah* the words كَمَا دَانُوا are used instead of كَمَا فَعَلُوا.

It needs to be kept in mind that in the case of any revengeful measure too, it is not permissible to do something which is forbidden in the *sharī'ah* in all forms.

The sentence فَمَنْ عَفَا وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ implies that no doubt every person who has been subjected to excesses and injustice has the right to take revenge commensurate to the harm inflicted upon him; however, a better attitude in this regard is to forgive and resolve the situation through reformatory measures. Though one has to sacrifice one's desires to adopt this attitude; however, this carries tremendous reward and the Almighty has taken it upon Himself to give it. It is evident from this that in general individual happenings it is more pleasing in the sight of God that a reformatory procedure be adopted whether this may be done by both the parties involved or by

38. And those who take revenge only when excess is committed again them.

39. And the reward of a sin is an act equal to it. But he who forgave and made amends, then his reward rests with God. God does not like the wrongdoers.

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requesting a third party intervention or if a third party itself takes the initiative in this regard.

The words اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ form a comprehensive admonition that God does not like people who are oppressive. In other words, if a person oppresses someone, he will earn God's anger and if a person answers the oppression of a person by a greater oppression, then he too will earn God's wrath. The desired attitude in the sight of God is that this oppression should be set right and reformatory steps be taken and if this is not to be, then revenge can be taken commensurate to the harm suffered.

وَلَمَنِ انْتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿٤١﴾ اِنَّمَا السَّبِيْلُ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَظْلِمُوْنَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾[40]

In the expression ظُلْمِهٖ the verbal noun is inclined to its object the way it is in the following verse of Sūrah al-Rūm: وَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُوْنَ. (۳۰:۳)

These verses answer those people who think that one of the requisites of religiosity is that one should continue to bear the atrocities of others and never take revenge; if someone takes revenge, then this is considered against religiosity and he is considered to be an equal sinner. The verse states that in such matters they are not to blame who took revenge after being oppressed; on the contrary, the blame rests on the oppressors who without any right show rebelliousness and arrogance in the land of God.

Consider next the expression: بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ. The Creator and Master of this world is God and these people have no share in its creation or organization; but still there demand is that no one should be disobedient to them. The Qur'ān says that they are the real criminals and for them is a painful punishment. If in response to them, the oppressed are forced to take some step, then they will not be held accountable for it; on the contrary, it will be the oppressors who will be accountable for it. Readers may look up my exegesis of verse 29 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah for more details on this issue.

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿٤٣﴾[41]

This verse summarizes the whole discussion, and a number of things become evident from it:

Firstly, although a person has the right to avenge on equal footing the harm inflicted on him, it is more desirable in the sight of God that the person show patience and forgive the oppressor.

Secondly, only those people will be able to forgive who have the trait of patience in

40. And those who take revenge after being wronged incur no blame. Blame is on those who are unjust and are rebellious in the land without any right. It is these people for whom there is a woeful torment.

41. And he who showed patience and forgave, then this is indeed from among lofty traits.

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them; those who are devoid of it will not be able to proceed in this regard. Thus a person should inculcate the spirit of patience in himself.

Thirdly, this is the character of nobility and loftiness. Those who imbibe it in themselves are noble and lofty people.

It needs to be kept in mind that Muslims are given these directions to counter the circumstances they were facing from the Quraysh near the time of their migration to Madīnah. Till that time neither were the Muslims organized as a political force nor was the truth conclusively conveyed to the Quraysh. After migration, when Muslims became an organized polity and the truth was also conclusively conveyed to the Quraysh, Muslims as a collectivity were directed by God to totally sever all their relations with them and continue to wage war against them until they submit to the authority of Islam.

Section V: Verses (44-50)

The succeeding verses relate to the subject raised in verse 36. The discourse in that verse had reached the stage that the life which the opponents of the Prophet (sws) have fallen to is temporary; the eternal treasures are for the believers who are leading their lives in such a way so as to reap the success of the Hereafter instead of the transient pleasures of this world. After that, the traits of the believers are mentioned in a few verses so that the discourse relates to the actual situation, and it becomes evident to the Muslims of those times that these glad tidings are for them and it becomes clear to their opponents that people who at that time were subjected to oppression by them will soon end up being successful.

After that, in the verses now under discussion, the earlier discourse is taken up again and first the Prophet (sws) is assured that those who are now facing the law of God cannot be guided by anyone else; these people will only realize when its too late. After that, the opponents of the Prophet (sws) are sounded a reminder as a final warning: they still have a chance to mend their ways; if they waste this opportunity, they will have another one. At the same time, the real reason of the arrogance of these people is delineated that whatever a person receives, he receives with the grace of God; but man is ungrateful and the very favours God bestows on him are used by him to rebel against God.

Readers may now study the succeeding verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ وَتَرَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَمَّا رَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ هَلْ اِلٰى مَرَدٍّ مِّنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿۴۴﴾ وَتَرٰىهُمْ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا خٰشِعِيْنَ مِنَ الذُّلِّ يَنْظُرُوْنَ مِنْ طَرْفٍ خَفِيٍّ ؕ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا

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اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَ اَهْلِيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ فِيْ عَذَابٍ مُّقِيْمٍ ﴿۴۵﴾ وَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ يَنْصُرُوْنَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ مَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿۴۶﴾ اِسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِرَبِّكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ
مَّلْجَاٍ يَّوْمَئِذٍ وَّ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّكِيْرٍ ﴿۴۷﴾ فَاِنْ اَعْرَضُوْا فَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ؕ اِنْ عَلَيْكَ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَ اِنَّآ اِذَآ اَذَقْنَا
الْاِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ بِهَا ۚ وَ اِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ فَاِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ كَفُوْرٌ ﴿۴۸﴾ لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ
الْاَرْضِ ؕ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِنَاثًا وَّ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ الذُّكُوْرَ ﴿۴۹﴾ اَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَّ اِنَاثًا ۚ وَ يَجْعَلُ مَنْ
يَّشَآءُ عَقِيْمًا ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۵۰﴾

And he whom God leads astray has none to help him. You will see these wrongdoers that when they face the punishment, they will exclaim: "Is there a way that can lead us back again to the world?" And you shall see them brought before Hell such that they will be bend down in humiliation looking to one another with furtive glances. And the true believers will say: "The real losers are those who put themselves and their people to loss on the Day of Judgement." Beware! These wrongdoers shall surely suffer everlasting torment. And there they will have no helpers who will be able to help them against God. And he whom God leads astray has no way to go. (44-46)

And respond to the call of your Lord before that day arrives from God which cannot be put off. On that day, there will be no refuge for you nor shall you be able to deny anything. (47)

If they pay no heed, then We have not sent you to be their keeper. Your only responsibility is to deliver. And when We bless man with some mercy of Ours, he rejoices in it; and if a calamity befalls him because of his deeds, he becomes ungrateful. (48)

To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He will. He gives daughters to whom He pleases and sons to whom He pleases and gives both sons and daughters to whom He desires, and He makes sterile whomsoever He desires. Omniscient is God alone, and mighty. (49-50)

Explanation

وَ مَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ وَ تَرَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَمَّا رَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ هَلْ اِلٰى مَرَدٍّ مِّنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿۴۴﴾[42]

In order to sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws), this verse refers to an established practice of God related to guiding people and leading them astray: those who are led astray by God because they prefer going astray are deprived by God from the urge and will to be guided, and he who loses God's support and help in this regard

42. And he whom God leads astray has none to help him. You will see these wrongdoers that when they face the punishment, they will exclaim: "Is there a way that can lead us back again to the world?" And you shall see them brought before Hell such that they will bend down in humiliation looking to one another with furtive glances.

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will find no other help. At this stage, however much as the Prophet (sws) may try, he will not be able to guide such people who have been cursed by God in this manner.

The word الظّٰلِمِيْنَ refers to the aforementioned wrongdoers whom the Almighty has led astray. The use of this attribute for them shows that these people in fact deserved this treatment: they deserved to be led astray because they did not use the abilities bestowed to them by God by not giving due importance to the innate guidance provided to them by Him. On the contrary, they blindly followed their desires as a result of which they became incriminated with disbelief and polytheism and ended up wronging their own souls. The verse says that today these unfortunate people are very proud on their attitude; but when they see the punishment of God they will longingly express if any option remains to return to the previous world so that they could earn some reward by doing good deeds and secure themselves from this punishment.

وَ تَرٰىهُمْ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا خٰشِعِيْنَ مِنَ الذُّلِّ يَنْظُرُوْنَ مِنْ طَرْفٍ خَفِيٍّ ؕ وَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنَّ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَ اَهْلِيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ فِيْ عَذَابٍ مُّقِيْمٍ ﴿۴۵﴾[43]

The antecedent of the pronoun in يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا is the الْعَذَابَ (punishment) mentioned in the previous verse. The word الْعَذَابَ is referred to by a feminine pronoun even though it is masculine because it actually refers to Hell or the fire of Hell which are feminine nouns in Arabic. In this manner, it is as if the nature of الْعَذَابَ has been explained. This style is very common in Arabic.

The verses say that today these people inebriated by their successful life are making fun of this punishment; however, the day in which they will face it they will out of humiliation look at each other with furtive glances with faces bent down. When a criminal is taken to the place of his execution, he does not have the guts to open his eyes wide to see the place of execution as well to see the executioner; he tries to look at them furtively.

After witnessing their humiliation and wretchedness, the believers will cry out that the real failures are those people who not only put themselves to loss on the Day of Judgement but also their family and associates by causing them to deviate from the right path through pressurizing them or teaching ill to them. The implication of the believers is that these short-sighted people being inebriated with the successes of life regarded them to be failures in the previous life; however, that failure is in fact no failure; real failure is failure on the Day of Judgement.

The sentence اَلَاۤ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ فِيْ عَذَابٍ مُّقِيْمٍ states why real failure is failure on the Day of Judgement: they should beware that the reason for this is that the wrongdoers will be

43. And the true believers will say: "The real losers are those who put themselves and their people to loss on the Day of Judgement." Beware, these wrongdoers shall surely suffer everlasting torment.

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inflicted with eternal punishment which they will not be able to ward off. In other words, the pains and pleasures of this world are temporary; however, the punishment of the Hereafter is eternal; for this reason, real failure is the failure people will encounter in the Hereafter.

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ يَنْصُرُوْنَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ ﴿۴۴﴾[44]

The words مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ mean "against God." The implication is that when on the Day of Judgement, these people will be engulfed by the punishment of God, none of their deities and helpers which they proudly relied on will be of any avail to them against God.

In the sentence وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ the same subject which was discussed in verse 44 above is raised again with slight change in words. Because of their evil deeds the Almighty has left them to wander astray and those whom God leaves to wander astray find no way – neither in this world nor in the Hereafter.

اِسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِرَبِّكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ مَّلْجَاٍ يَّوْمَئِذٍ وَّمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّكِيْرٍ ﴿۴۷﴾[45]

In my opinion, the expression مِنَ اللّٰهِ is connected to اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ and لَا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ is an adjective that qualifies يَوْمٌ. This call is meant for admonishment and warning. They are told that it is still time to accept the call of their Lord and earn success in the Hereafter. Otherwise they should remember that when the Day which is certain to come from their Lord arrives, it will be immaterial whether they accept the call or not; on that Day, they will have no place to take refuge in neither will they be able to reject anything on that Day; whatever comes before them, they will have to submit to it come what may. Generally, people have translated the word نَّكِيْرٍ as "denial." However, its correct meaning is "to reject something repulsive because of a sense of honour." I have researched out this word at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

فَاِنْ اَعْرَضُوْا فَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ؕ اِنْ عَلَيْكَ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَاِنَّآ اِذَآ اَذَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ بِهَا ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ فَاِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ كَفُوْرٌ ﴿۴۸﴾[46]

This verse addresses the Prophet (sws). He is told that if these people accept his call

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44. And there they will have no helpers who will be able to help them against God. And he whom God leads astray has no way to go.

45. And respond to the call of your Lord before that day arrives from God which cannot be put off. On that day, there will be no refuge for you nor shall you be able to deny anything.

46. If they pay no heed, then We have not sent you to be their keeper. Your only responsibility is to deliver. And when We bless man with some mercy of Ours, he rejoices in it; and if a calamity befalls him because of his deeds, he becomes ungrateful.

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then it is okay; however, if they don't, then he should not the slightest care about them for he has not been sent as someone to impose his call upon them and make them forcibly accept it; his only responsibility is to present his message before people. In verse 6 earlier, this subject has been raised.

The words وَاِنَّآ اِذَآ اَذَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ بِهَا ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ فَاِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ كَفُوْرٌ unveil the reason for the evasion of people: they are mean and ungrateful people. When such people receive the blessings and favours of God instead showing gratitude, they are overcome by conceit and arrogance, and if they are faced with some calamity in retribution of their deeds they end up in despair and frustration and show ungratefulness. In other words, the Prophet (sws) is told not to expect them to adopt the right path; the affluence and riches they have today have inebriated them so much that they are not prepared to listed to anyone. However, if the Almighty makes them taste the slightest of torment that they are demanding, they will become despondent.

لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاۗءُ ۭ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ اِنَاثًا وَّيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ الذُّكُوْرَ ۝۴۹ اَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَّاِنَاثًا ۚ وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ عَقِيْمًا ۭ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ ۝۵۰[47]

These verses state the belief deprived of which they have become mean and ungrateful. If these people believe that the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belongs to God; He alone creates what He wants and bestows whatever He wants to whomsoever He wants, they would not have ended up in this state and would have expressed their gratitude on the favours of God and would have expressed patience on the trials of God.

The words يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ اِنَاثًا وَّيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ الذُّكُوْرَ. اَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَّاِنَاثًا ۚ وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ عَقِيْمًا ۭ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ after يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاۗء mention the specific after the general: it is God Who gives daughters to whomsoever He pleases and sons to whosoever He pleases and gives both sons and daughters to whomsoever He desires and deprives whomsoever He wants of any offspring. It is He who knows all and is very powerful and whatever He does He does on the basis of His knowledge and power and no one other has any role in this. For this reason, it is the duty of people to trust God in all affairs; they should neither be arrogant nor helpless and nor should they devote themselves to anyone other than Him.

47. To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He will. He gives daughters to whom He pleases and sons to whom He pleases and gives both sons and daughters to whom He desires, and He makes sterile whomsoever He desires. Omniscient is God alone, and mighty.

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Section VI: Verses (51-53)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. Deliberation will show that these closing verses not only relate to the whole *sūrah* in its collective capacity but are also deeply connected to the previous section. I have been explaining this style of the Qur'ān at various places of this exegesis that generally a *sūrah* ends on the topic with which it begins. Thus, this *sūrah* began with the words كَذٰلِكَ يُوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْكَ وَاِلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ie. this Qur'ān is a revelation of the genre of revelations sent by God to other prophets and messengers. After that, the similarity between the purpose and means is explained and the *sūrahs* ends with the topic with which it began. Thus in the end the words occur are: وَكَذٰلِكَ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ رُوْحًا مِّنْ اَمْرِنَا. They are very similar to the words found at the beginning. This is a very clear argument on the fact that the whole *sūrah* from the beginning to the end is one unit.

The relation of this section with the previous one is that the previous one ended with a mention of the reason of the evasion shown by the opponents. One big reason for their evasion was that they would say that if Muḥammad (sws) claims that God reveals His words to Him, why does not God talk to them as well? This objection is answered in these verses and it will become evident from the exegesis of these verses that this answer is very comprehensive and conclusive.

Readers may study the forthcoming verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّكَلِّمَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا وَحْيًا اَوْ مِنْ وَّرَآئِ حِجَابٍ اَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُوْلًا فَيُوْحِيَ بِاِذْنِهٖ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيٌّ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۵۱﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ رُوْحًا مِّنْ اَمْرِنَا ؕ مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِيْ مَا الْكِتٰبُ وَلَا الْاِيْمَانُ وَلٰكِنْ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُوْرًا نَّهْدِيْ بِهٖ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا ؕ وَاِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِيْٓ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۵۲﴾ صِرَاطِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ اَلَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَصِيْرُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿۵۳﴾

And it is not the status of any mortal that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger and through His permission, He sends revelation to him of what He wills. Exalted is He, and Wise. And thus have We revealed to you a spirit from our matters. Neither did you know anything of a Book or anything of faith; but We made it a light whereby We guide those of Our servants whom We desire. And indeed you guide to a straight path: the path of God, to whom belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. Beware! To God all things shall in the end return. (51-53)

Explanation

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وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّكَلِّمَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا وَحْيًا اَوْ مِنْ وَّرَآئِ حِجَابٍ اَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُوْلًا فَيُوْحِيَ بِاِذْنِهٖ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيٌّ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۵۱﴾[48]

This verse answers the objection or demand of the opponents which is cited at many places in the Qur'ān viz. if God converses with this prophet as he claims, why does he not converse face to face with them (لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللّٰهُ) ? What is so special about him that God speaks to him only and does not regard them to be worthy of conversation even though they are much more affluent and honourable than him?

In response to this, the verse says that no mortal has the status that God talk to him face to face. He talks to them through revelation or from behind a veil or through an envoy of His who reveals to that mortal – whom God chooses to speak to – with God's permission whatever He desires.

The words وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ point to the fact that what hinders direct conversation with God is man's own frailty and inability. The person of the Almighty is so exalted and lofty and the centre of such radiance and light that no mortal is able to face Him directly. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān that Moses (sws), a mighty messenger of God, expressed his wish to see God. He was told by the Almighty that he cannot see Him; even mountains are unable to witness God's radiance, so how can he be in a position to do so?

The words اِلَّا وَحْيًا اَوْ مِنْ وَّرَآئِ حِجَابٍ اَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُوْلًا فَيُوْحِيَ بِاِذْنِهٖ مَا يَشَآءُ say that if the Almighty speaks with mortals, then there are three ways that He adopts for this.

First, through revelation. This means "to implant words in the heart." It is signified by the words إلقاء فی الروع[49] and نفث فی الروع[50] in Ḥadīth literature. In other words, the Almighty implants His message in the heart of His messenger and the messenger preserves it. It is evident from the words that what is implanted is not in the form of a thought or an idea: it is in the form of distinct words which the messenger hears and understands and also preserves. Here it needs to specially be kept in mind that the Almighty has delineated His way of conversing with His messengers. For this reason, in my opinion, it is incorrect to believe that revelation is implanted in the heart in the form of a thought or an idea and it is the messenger who gives his own words to this thought.

Second, from behind a veil. Here a prophet does hear the words and voice of God but he is not able to see Him. An example of this is the address of God to Moses (sws). It is mentioned both in the Torah and the Qur'ān that God conversed with

48. And it is not the status of any mortal that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger and through His permission, he sends revelation to him of what He wills. Exalted is He, and Wise.

49. See, for example: Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-'Aynī, *'Umdah al-qārī*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth, n.d.), 44.

50. See, for example: Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Bāqī ibn Yūsuf al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ Mu'aṭṭā' Imām Mālik*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1411 AH), 20.

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Moses (sws) but did not see Him. Moreover, the Qur'ān has specified that God never conversed with any other prophet except Moses (sws). This honour solely rests with him.

Third, the Almighty sends a messenger ie an angel and that angel sends whatever revelation God wants to, to the heart of the prophet. For example, it is stated in Sūrah al-Baqarah:

قُلۡ مَنۡ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّجِبۡرِيۡلَ فَاِنَّهٗ نَزَّلَهٗ عَلٰى قَلۡبِكَ بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ. (۹۷:۲)

Tell them: "He who is the enemy of Gabriel should remember that God has revealed this Qur'ān to your heart with the command of God." (2:97)

In Sūrah al-Naḥl, the same thing is stated thus:

قُلۡ نَزَّلَهٗ رُوۡحُ الۡقُدُسِ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ بِالۡحَقِّ. (۱۰۲:۱٦)

Say: "The Holy Spirit has revealed this Qur'ān from your Lord with the truth." (16: 102)

These are the three ways in which God converses with His prophets. The first of these two are distinguished by the third that in them the words are revealed to a prophet directly without any intermediary ie Gabriel is not present in between. However, in the third, Gabriel is present in the form of an intermediary. Among these three ways, two – ie. the first and third – are very common. The second of these was specifically adopted for Moses (sws). No other prophet, as referred to earlier, had this distinction. If the principle of mentioning important things first is kept in mind, it is evident that the first of the ways mentioned is the most superior.

Here only three ways are mentioned because the question in consideration of which this verse has been revealed necessitated the mention of these three. However, it is mentioned in the Qur'ān that besides these three ways there are two others as well through which the Almighty informs some of His intentions to some of His near ones.

One of these ways is that an angel assumes the form of a human being and delivers the message of God. Examples of this exist in the accounts of Abraham (sws), Lot (sws) and Mary (sws) which are mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān.

The second of these ways is visions and dreams. Whatever the Almighty wants His creatures to do are given as a directive in these dreams or prophets are shown certain incidents and sights. For example, the directive of sacrificing his son was given to Abraham (sws) in a dream. Similarly, many incidents regarding the battle of Badr were shown to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) in a dream. A very important dream is mentioned in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl.

It is evident from these details that there are five ways in all in which the Almighty

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converses with His prophets or inspires them with a revelation. Except for being directly spoken to which is the distinction of Moses (sws), each of the other four ways were employed by God to communicate with Muḥammad (sws). It may also be kept in mind that Moses (sws) too was blessed with the favour of being directly spoken to once or twice. The rest of the Torah was revealed to him in the manner other scriptures were revealed.

God has referred to two of His attributes at the of the verse viz. اِنَّهٗ عَلِیٌّ حَکِیۡمٌ. One of them highlights His exaltedness, greatness and loftiness and the other His wisdom and the consequences of His wisdom which include mercy, justice and guidance. By combining these two attributes, it becomes evident that so exalted is the person of God that neither does He need to converse with anyone nor does anyone have the status to converse with Him. However, besides this exaltedness and loftiness God is also wise, just and merciful; for this reason, in order to guide His creatures and to reform them He speaks to them out of His grace and for this He adopted ways which have been outlined earlier. In other words, what is implied is that people who press and demand that God should talk to them face to face are neither aware of the exaltedness and loftiness of God nor of their own meager existence. Such people will be doomed by this arrogance of theirs.

وَکَذٰلِکَ اَوۡحَیۡنَاۤ اِلَیۡکَ رُوۡحًا مِّنۡ اَمۡرِنَا ؕ مَا کُنۡتَ تَدۡرِیۡ مَا الۡکِتٰبُ وَلَا الۡاِیۡمَانُ وَلٰکِنۡ جَعَلۡنٰہُ نُوۡرًا نَّہۡدِیۡ بِہٖ مَنۡ نَّشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِنَا ؕ وَ اِنَّکَ لَتَہۡدِیۡۤ اِلٰی صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِیۡمٍ ﴿۵۲﴾ صِرَاطِ اللّٰہِ الَّذِیۡ لَہٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِلَی اللّٰہِ تَصِیۡرُ الۡاُمُوۡرُ ﴿۵۳﴾[51]

These verses address the Prophet Muḥammad (sws): he has been sent رُوۡح (*rūḥ*) in the known and conventional way. The word رُوۡح means "revelation." By calling it with this name, the purpose is to highlight that in revelation is the means of real life of the Prophet (sws) as well as for those who adopt it. All divine scriptures allude to this reality. As pointed out by Jesus (sws): "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew, 4:4)

The words مِّنۡ اَمۡرِنَا form an attribute for the word رُوۡح as an answer to a spontaneous question that may arise. It refers to the fact that this رُوۡح is from among God's matters belonging to the unseen (*ghayb*). Its nature and form is only known to God or to the prophet who experiences it; not everyone can have an idea of its nature and reality; for this reason, neither should everyone go after trying to find out its form nor should a

51. And thus have We revealed to you a spirit from our matters. Neither did you know anything of a Book or anything of faith; but We made it a light whereby We guide those of Our servants whom We desire. And indeed you guide to a straight path: the path of God, to whom belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. Beware! To God all things shall in the end return.

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sensible person deny it simply because he himself has not experienced it. People who are not aware of the pangs of liver pain do not have the right to deny the existence of such a pain. This subject is discussed in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl in the following words:

وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الرُّوْحِ ۭ قُلِ الرُّوْحُ مِنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّيْ وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا. (۸۵:۱۷)

And they ask you about *rūḥ* [*waḥī*]. Tell them: "This *rūḥ* is from among my Lord's matters. And little indeed is the knowledge given to you." (17:85)

It needs to be kept in mind that when the prophets of God expressed before their people that God sends down His رُوح to them, the foolish among them made fun of its existence and remarked that why they themselves are not able to experience it. This question is answered in the above-cited verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, and to refer to this very answer the word رُوح is qualified by مِّنْ اَمْرِنَا in the verse under discussion so that if this question arises in the mind of someone, he gets its answer within the discourse.

There is another aspect of this to which I shall allude in the exegesis of verses 4-5 of Sūrah al-Dukhān and verse 4 of Sūrah al-Qadr.

The words: مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِيْ مَا الْكِتٰبُ وَلَا الْاِيْمَانُ وَلٰكِنْ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُوْرًا نَّهْدِيْ بِهٖ مَنْ نَّشَاۗءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا mention the benefits of this رُوح: the prophet was not aware of the book and faith; however, as result of this revelation from God, the Almighty made his heart so radiant that he became a walking lighthouse for his people, and God blesses this radiance of revelation to whomsoever He desires among His people. His desire is dependent upon the ability of a person to receive this radiance. He blesses such people with this radiance because every desire and intention of God is based on His wisdom and justice. Here it should be kept in consideration that just as not every one is worthy of being selected as a prophet; God selects only those among His servants for this position who are worthy of it; in a similar manner, this radiance too can be received by those who have the ability. Thus these words answer the question of the people who ask why Muḥammad (sws) was selected from among themselves for this position and why did He leave them out. Moreover, these words also sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that not every one can benefit from the light he is showing them; only those people will benefit from it who will prove worthy of it; this light will blind the eyes of those who are not worthy of it instead of showing guidance to them.

Here it may be kept in mind that the relationship between the Book and Faith is the same as that between the body and the soul. The Book is entirely a manifestation and embodiment of Faith. Put in simple words, the Book is the statement of the requirements of Faith. For this reason, both are related to one another as the body is to its soul. As far as the Book is concerned, the Prophet (sws) was not aware of it because he was unlettered; however, the negation of Faith is with reference to its details and requirements; in other words, the Prophet (sws) was unaware of all the details and requirements of Faith otherwise the prophets of God are fully conversant

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with the light of their upright nature. Thus Faith in its concise form is found in them which after becoming irradiated by the light of divine revelation lights up the whole world like the sun. Since the relationship between the radiance of human nature and the radiance of divine revelation is that of a particle and the sun, for this reason there exists a negation for the former in this verse; however, it is nothing but a particle of this glittering sun and only those people can benefit from the light of this divine revelation who protect the light of their nature. Those who deprive themselves of it deprive themselves of this light shown to them by the prophets of God.

My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī is of the view that the word Faith here refers to Wisdom. In his opinion, Faith is an amalgam of three things: words, deeds and the circumstances which befall a person and Wisdom too has this essence. So when the verse says that the Prophet (sws) was not aware of the Book and Faith what was meant was that he was not aware of the Book and Wisdom. In other words, the word "Faith" actually is an explanation of the word "Wisdom."

The words وَاِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِيْٓ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ state the blessing of this light with reference to the creatures of this world: the Almighty blessed this light to the Prophet (sws) and now he is guiding people to this straight path of God to Whom belongs everything in the heavens and the earth. If people want to succeed in the Hereafter, they should duly value this guidance given by him.

The words اَلَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَصِيْرُ الْاُمُوْرُ at the end warn people that they should listen up that all matters will return to God to whom belongs everything. So they should be ready to come to His presence and be accountable for their deeds.

With the blessing of God, the exegesis of this *sūrah* ends on these lines. وآخر دعوانا أن اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last declaration is that all gratitude belongs to God).

Raḥmānābād,
12th December, 1975 AD
8th Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 1395 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Zukhruf (43)

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Sūrah al-Zukhruf

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* forms a pair with the previous one. For this reason, there is not much difference between the central themes of both. Like other *sūrahs* of the group, the central theme of this *sūrah* too is *tawḥīd* (monotheism), and it is to highlight the importance of *tawḥīd* that the Day of Judgement is also mentioned. In particular, the divinity of the angels and the concept of their intercession is refuted in detail, and a rebuttal is sounded to the claim of the Quraysh that the religion of polytheism that they are following was inherited by them from Abraham (sws).

In the previous *sūrah*, the exaltedness of the Qur'ān was highlighted from a specific aspect. In this *sūrah*, by highlighting some other aspects of this exaltedness, the Quraysh are warned that if merely because of conceit in the their worldly riches they do not duly value the Qur'ān, then they should remember that the only responsibility of the Prophet (sws) was to communicate it to them; the responsibility of its denial will rest on them.

The answers to the objections which the opponents had raised on the Qur'ān viz a viz the nature of revelation and which they were making as an excuse for rejecting it have been given in the previous *sūrahs*. In this *sūrah*, the harmony of the Qur'ān with the message of the previous prophets is explained: the religion of *tawḥīd* which the Qur'ān is calling them too is the very one which all prophets called people to. Those who are denying it are only calling for their doom – the doom which befell other nations who rejected their respective prophets.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-8): The favour done by the Almighty to the Arabs by revealing the Qur'ān to them and the conclusive communication of the truth as a result of it are mentioned. The Quraysh are reminded that if they too deny their messenger like the previous nations, then they too shall meet the fate they met, and they should remember that these previous nations were far ahead of them in might and majesty.

Verses (9-15): The confession of the opponents of Islam that the Powerful and Knowledgeable God has created these heavens and the earth is referred to. However, in spite of this confession, they have set up partners with God from among His servants. The fact is that the signs of God's power, providence, wisdom present at every step of this universe bear witness to monotheism and the Day of Judgement.

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Verses (16-25): The conception of the divinity of the angels is refuted through two aspects.

The first of these is that people regard the angels to be the daughters of God even though they dislike having daughters for themselves. Not linking something for their own selves and ascribing it to God is absolute foolishness and showing disrespect to the powerful and majestic God.

The second of these is that the only argument they have to associate the angels in Godhead is that their forefathers regarded this to be so. The truth is that this is no argument of the veracity of a view. They should either present evidence from the Book of God or from human intellect and nature; otherwise, they should get ready to face the fate which was met by the nations who refuted their messengers by presenting such lame excuses.

Verses (26-28): In the light of historical evidence, a refutation is made of the claim of the idolaters that they inherited their religion of idolatry from their forefathers. Their real ancestor is Abraham (sws) who left their nation by uttering these historic words: اِنَّنِیْ بَرَآءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ. (٤٣: ٢٦) (I am acquitted of the things which you worship, (43:26)) and settled his son Ishmael in Makkah. This declaration of migration persisted as a sacred tradition among his progeny. So how can these idolaters claim that they have inherited idolatry from their forefathers?

Verses (29-45): The real reason of the rebelliousness of the rejecters is referred to: the arguments they are trying to concoct to support their ignorance are baseless. The real thing which has become a source of trial for them is their affluence even though this affluence cannot tilt the scales of God's balance. The real success is that of the Hereafter, and they are showing indifference to it. Satan has blindfolded them, and this blindfold will be unfastened from them when it is of no use. The Prophet (sws) is then directed to hold fast to his preaching efforts. The Almighty will make him observe their fate in his lifetime or they will meet it after he passes away. The religion which the Prophet (sws) is calling them to is this very true religion; all prophets of God bear evidence to it.

Verses (46-65): The preaching of Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) – two prophets of God is referred to: they too called people to this very *tawḥīd*. Moses (sws) showed great signs one after the other to the Pharaoh and his chiefs. However, no sign could convince them. The reason for their denial was the same as that of these arrogant chiefs of the Quraysh. At last, they met the fate they deserved. These chiefs too will reach the same fate.

Jesus (sws) too called people to this very *tawḥīd*. As soon as they hear his name, the pugnacious among the Quraysh are propelled to argue with the Prophet (sws). They contend that their own deities are better than Jesus (sws). In other words, they think that the Qur'ān is mentioning the good name of Jesus (sws) so that like the Christians people regard him to be the son of God. The fact is that the Qur'ān is not presenting

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Jesus (sws) as the son of God; it is presenting him because he had invited people to the religion of God by the words: (٦٤:٤٣) اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ رَبِّیْ وَ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ (God alone is my Lord and He alone is your Lord too; so serve Him only, (43:64)). Differences were created in this true call of Jesus (sws) by later generations, and they will soon meet their fate.

Verses (66-89): In these closing verses of the *sūrah*, first the fate of those people is mentioned who will profess faith in this true call; then the fate of those people is depicted who will deny it. In the end, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should ignore these stubborn people. They will observe themselves the fate they will meet, and the actual reality behind intercession of the angels on the basis of which they are showing conceit will also come before them.

Readers can take a look at this analysis of the *sūrah's* meanings and see how each part of it is deeply related to its central theme. They may also see that from the beginning to the end the whole *sūrah* is a harmonious whole. We now begin the exegesis of the *sūrah*. It is only God who gives us the urge to do so.

Section I: Verses (1:25)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

حٰمٓ ﴿۱﴾ وَ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِیْنِ ﴿۲﴾ اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰهُ قُرْءٰنًا عَرَبِیًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾ وَ اِنَّهٗ فِیْۤ اُمِّ الْكِتٰبِ لَدَیْنَا لَعَلِیٌّ حَكِیْمٌ ﴿۴﴾
اَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا اَنْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّسْرِفِیْنَ ﴿۵﴾ وَ كَمْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ نَّبِیٍّ فِی الْاَوَّلِیْنَ ﴿۶﴾ وَ مَا یَاْتِیْهِمْ مِّنْ نَّبِیٍّ اِلَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ
یَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿۷﴾ فَاَهْلَكْنَاۤ اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا وَّ مَضٰی مَثَلُ الْاَوَّلِیْنَ ﴿۸﴾ وَ لَىِٕنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ لَیَقُوْلُنَّ
خَلَقَهُنَّ الْعَزِیْزُ الْعَلِیْمُ ﴿۹﴾ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَّ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ فِیْهَا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ وَ الَّذِیْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ
مَآءًۢ بِقَدَرٍ ۚ فَاَنْشَرْنَا بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّیْتًا ۚ كَذٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ الْاَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا وَ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَ الْاَنْعَامِ مَا
تَرْكَبُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ لِتَسْتَوٗا عَلٰی ظُهُوْرِهٖ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ اِذَا اسْتَوَیْتُمْ عَلَیْهِ وَ تَقُوْلُوْا سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِیْ سَخَّرَ لَنَا هٰذَا وَ مَا كُنَّا لَهٗ
مُقْرِنِیْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ وَ اِنَّاۤ اِلٰی رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَ جَعَلُوْا لَهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ جُزْءًا ؕ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَكَفُوْرٌ مُّبِیْنٌ ﴿۱۵﴾ اَمِ اتَّخَذَ مِمَّا یَخْلُقُ
بَنٰتٍ وَّ اَصْفٰىكُمْ بِالْبَنِیْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾ وَ اِذَا بُشِّرَ اَحَدُهُمْ بِمَا ضَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهٗ مُسْوَدًّا وَّ هُوَ كَظِیْمٌ ﴿۱۷﴾ اَوَ مَنْ یُّنَشَّؤُا فِی الْحِلْیَةِ
وَ هُوَ فِی الْخِصَامِ غَیْرُ مُبِیْنٍ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَ جَعَلُوا الْمَلٰٓىِٕكَةَ الَّذِیْنَ هُمْ عِبٰدُ الرَّحْمٰنِ اِنَاثًا ؕ اَشَهِدُوْا خَلْقَهُمْ ؕ سَتُكْتَبُ شَهَادَتُهُمْ وَ
یُسْـَٔلُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ وَ قَالُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ الرَّحْمٰنُ مَا عَبَدْنٰهُمْ ؕ مَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا یَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ اَمْ اٰتَیْنٰهُمْ كِتٰبًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ
فَهُمْ بِهٖ مُسْتَمْسِكُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ بَلْ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّا وَجَدْنَاۤ اٰبَآءَنَا عَلٰۤی اُمَّةٍ وَّ اِنَّا عَلٰۤی اٰثٰرِهِمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ وَ كَذٰلِكَ مَاۤ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِیْ
قَرْیَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِیْرٍ اِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوْهَاۤ ۙ اِنَّا وَجَدْنَاۤ اٰبَآءَنَا عَلٰۤی اُمَّةٍ وَّ اِنَّا عَلٰۤی اٰثٰرِهِمْ مُّقْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ قٰلَ اَوَ لَوْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِاَهْدٰی مِمَّا
وَجَدْتُّمْ عَلَیْهِ اٰبَآءَكُمْ ؕ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّا بِمَاۤ اُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ كَیْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِیْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾

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In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Ḥā Mīm. The clear Book bears evidence. We have revealed it as an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may understand. And indeed, it is with Us in the Real Book, the exalted and full of wisdom. (1-4)

Should We ignore reminding you only because you are a people who transgress bounds? And how many a prophet did We send forth to the earlier peoples? And whichever prophet came to them, they would make only fun of him. So, We destroyed those more mightier than them, and examples of previous peoples have passed. (5-8)

If you ask them: "Who created the heavens and the earth?" they will definitely say: "The powerful and knowing God created them." (9)

Who made this earth a cradle for you and made paths in it so that you find your way? And Who sent down water from the heavens in a certain measure? Thus We revived through it a dead land. In a similar manner, shall you be taken out of your graves. And Who created all kinds of things and made ships and beasts for you on which you ride so that you sit firm on their backs? Then you recall in mind the favour of the Almighty when you sit on them and say: "Glory be to Him Who put these things to our service and We would not have been able to subject them to our control. And, indeed, to God shall we return. (10-14)

And these people assign a part of their servants to Him. Indeed, man is an open ingrate. Did He choose daughters for Himself from His creations and gave you sons? And when any of them is given glad tidings of that which He regards as an attribute of God, His face darkens and He remains depressed that is she born who is reared among trinkets and is not able to converse in expressing superiority. (15-18)

And they regard the angels who are the servants of the Most Gracious to be daughters. Were they present at their birth? This testimony of theirs has been noted, and they shall be questioned. (19)

And they say: "Had God willed, we would never have worshipped them." They have no knowledge in this; they are only wildly guessing. Have We given them a scripture before this so that they derive an argument from it? In fact, they say: "We found our ancestors on a practice and we are merely walking in their footsteps." And in this manner, whenever We sent a warner to a settlement, its affluence people remarked: "We have found our ancestors on a practice and We shall keep following their footsteps." The warner said: "What if I bring to you something which gives more guidance than what you found your ancestors on, will you still follow them?" They replied: "We reject everything with which you have been sent." So, We took revenge from them; then see what fate those who disbelieved met. (20-25)

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Explanation

حٰمٓ[1]

Like the previous *sūrahs*, the Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah* too is Ḥā Mīm. I have already alluded to the fact that a similarity in name of *sūrahs* points to a similarity in the topics they discuss. Thus all the Ḥawāmīm, which readers have been studying, stand for the same topic. The difference is only of style, nature of arguments and of conciseness and comprehensiveness.

وَالْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ[2]

Here an oath is sworn by the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is qualified by the attribute مُبِيْنٌ. The whole expression would mean that the Qur'ān is a book which explains. In other words, it presents a testimony on every claim it presents and does not require an external argument to do so. People who are trying to find excuses to deny it are only befooling their own selves.

Here the complement of oath is suppressed. Wherever there is evident indication for this suppression and the oath itself explains its complement, at such places, the complement is suppressed. There are many examples of such suppressions in the Qur'ān. A very clear precedent is found in Sūrah Qāf. Here the word مُبِيْنٌ points to the complement of oath. Hence there is no need to mention it separately. In other words, the obvious does not require any proof of its existence.

اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰهُ قُرْءٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ[3]

This is a reference to a particular aspect of the Qur'ān being an explanatory book: God has revealed the Qur'ān as an Arabic Book so that its immediate addressees may understand it. This topic is brought up in various styles in the previous *sūrahs* of this group as well, and I have explained that the revelation of the Qur'ān in Arabic was a great favour to the Arabs, and also a means of the final conclusive communication of the truth to them. It is very evident how it is a favour to them: God had revealed His final and complete guidance to them in their own language so that they could be enlightened by it directly without any external help and as such are not indebted to others for receiving guidance; and in fact others are indebted to them in this matter. It is a means of the final conclusive communication of the truth to them because God had revealed this guidance in their own language thus leaving them with no excuse to escape from its dictates. They cannot present this excuse that the addressees are Arabs and the book revealed to them is not in Arabic.

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1. Ḥā Mīm.
2. The clear Book bears evidence.
3. We have revealed it as an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may understand.

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وَاِنَّهٗ فِیْۤ اُمِّ الْكِتٰبِ لَدَیْنَا لَعَلِیٌّ حَكِیْمٌ ۚ[4]

This verse points to the exaltedness of the Qur'ān that it is not a jest or joke; on the contrary, it occupies a very regal and exalted status. Its regal status is explained by the fact that the book is found in the اُمِّ الْكِتٰبِ or the guarded tablet which lies with God, and it is revealed from there for their guidance. The implication is that no one should try to make fun of it by regarding it to be an inspiration from the jinn, soothsaying of the soothsayers, poetry of poets or orations of orators. The fact is that this light has been revealed from the fountainhead of light with whose radiance the heavens and the earth are lit up, and Who is the actual fountainhead of all knowledge. Unfortunate are the people who do not value it.

Its exalted status is alluded to by the words لَعَلِیٌّ حَكِیْمٌ. The Qur'ān in itself is very superior and full of wisdom. It may be recalled that exactly these very attributes have been mentioned for the Almighty in verse 51 of the previous *sūrah*, and is mentioned while the Qur'ān and divine revelation was being discussed. It is obvious that every discourse is the reflection of its author. Since God is عَلِیٌّ حَكِیْمٌ hence His words are also عَلِیٌّ حَكِیْمٌ. It is evident from this that those who have the ability to value great and subtle things will be able to value this discourse; as far as dunces and thick-headed people are concerned, they are neither worthy of this discourse nor will they value it.

Another purpose of referring to the exalted status of the Qur'ān is to direct the attention of its opponents to the fact that it is the word of the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and not the pleading of a pleader. If they do not value it, they will only deprive themselves, and will not harm God or His word in any way. Their superiority and exaltedness is an independent trait of theirs and is not related to the acceptance or rejection of their addressees.

اَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا اَنْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّسْرِفِیْنَ ۚ[5]

The implication of this verse is that even though these people are ungrateful and are insulting and rejecting this exalted discourse, and are not prepared to reform the evils they have done by wronging their souls by being incriminated with polytheism and disbelief, this does not mean that they should have been left to themselves or should now be left to themselves and that they not be fully informed of the devastating consequences of their ailments. This situation of theirs demands that they be cured of these ailments instead of being ignored. Thus to remind and to teach them, the Almighty revealed a Book to them. Whether they value it or not, this reminder will be sounded to them until the truth is conclusively conveyed to them so that those who want to adopt the path that will lead

4. And indeed, it is with Us in the Real Book, the exalted and full of wisdom.
5. Should We ignore reminding you only because you are a people who transgress bounds?

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them to life are provided with the opportunity to do so with full vision, and those who want to adopt the path that will lead them to destruction do so after this conclusive communication of the truth. This reminder and admonition of these people is taking place according to an established practice of God. With however much hate and arrogance they may reject this, it is bound to reach its culmination.

The word صَفْحًا, in my opinion, connotes an accusative of cause (*maf'ūl lahū*), and means "to ignore something." The expression ضرب عنه الشیء would mean: "removal of something from someone." The words اَنْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّسْرِفِيْنَ state the their real ailment, and word مُّسْرِفِيْنَ actually denotes اَسْرَفُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ (being unjust to their souls). The greatest injustice one can inflict on one's soul is becoming incriminated with polytheism. In other words, what is implied here is that when they are inflicted with the filth of disbelief and polytheism, how was it possible that the Almighty not show compassion to them? The people who are actually worthy of medicine are the sick whether they value it or not. If they value it, it will be only for their own good and if they do not do so, they will only invite their doom.

وَكَمْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ نَّبِيٍّ فِى الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَمَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ اِلَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾ فَاَهْلَكْنَآ اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا وَّمَضٰى مَثَلُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾[6]

These verses reinforce what is said earlier through history, and are addressed to the Prophet (sws) to comfort him. He is told that the behaviour his opponents have adopted with him is no different from the one which was adopted by the nations of the previous messengers; the Almighty sent many messengers before him to remind and reform people, but each nation made fun of its messenger and showed disrespect to his advice; finally, the Almighty routed these nations and they were not at all less powerful and mighty than the Quraysh; in fact, they were much more, but the wrath of God broke their backs.

The words وَمَضٰى مَثَلُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ refer to the fact that examples of this practice of God can be seen in history. The reference is to the nations of 'Ād, Thamūd and to ones whose destruction has been mentioned in previous *sūrahs* and is also coming up in succeeding ones.

وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ خَلَقَهُنَّ الْعَزِيْزُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٩﴾[7]

This verse mentions the details of the stubbornness and haughtiness of the Qur'ān

6. And how many a prophet did We send forth to the earlier peoples? And whichever prophet came to them, they would make only fun of him. So, We destroyed those more mightier than them, and examples of previous peoples have passed.

7. If you ask them: "Who created the heavens and the earth?" they will definitely say: "The powerful and knowing God created them."

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which has been mentioned in verse 5 earlier. This mention will continue till quite further ahead. These people are willing to fight the Prophet (sws) to defend their religion of disbelief and polytheism, but the fact is that they themselves are in a state of discrepancy in their thoughts to which their aggression in opposition is not letting them direct their attention to. If they are asked about the creator of the heavens and the earth, they will definitely answer that God, the powerful and knowledgeable is their creator; however, on the other hand, such is the extent of their foolishness that in the words of the Qur'ān: وَ جَعَلُوْا لَهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ جُزْءًا ؕ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَكَفُوْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ. (۱۵:۴۳) (and these people assign a part of their servants to Him, 43:15). It may be kept in consideration that the idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth and of all other creatures, as has been mentioned in detail in previous *sūrahs*. However, on the other hand, they also believed that the angels are the daughters of God who are very near to Him and share His being and attributes and for this reason worshipping them would take them closer to God and grant them more children and opulence.

الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَّ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ فِیْهَا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾[8]

This verse and the succeeding three are not part of the speech of the Idolaters. They are insertions from God. The purpose is to show that any person who reflects deeply on the way this universe has been created, will find in it such signs of God's power, providence and wisdom that he will definitely acknowledge His oneness and also the coming of a Day of reward and punishment. The purpose of this detail is to show that the confession of the idolaters that God, the all powerful and all knowing, is the creator of the heavens and the earth, if extrapolated in the right direction would entail the implications mentioned in this insertion from God. But the idolaters after taking the first step in the right direction take a wrong turn as a result of which they bring to nothing a belief they acknowledge and thus lose their way.

The verse says that it is the all powerful and all knowing God Who has created the heavens and the earth (and whom they also acknowledge as the creator). In order to nurture and sustain them, He has made this earth a cradle. The aspect of making the earth a cradle is further explained by the Qur'ān at another place by saying that with His great power and wisdom God has set forth on it mountains so that the earth does not tumble away with them and also placed in them paths and ways. In other words, if God set forth mountains on the earth to balance it, then this was not done in a manner to hinder their access to various places; He placed trails and routes between these mountains both in the land and in the sea so that their caravans and ships are able to travel from one country to another.

The words لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ are very meaningful and subtle. One meaning of this expression is that the paths and routes are placed by the Almighty in between the

8. Who made this earth a cradle for you and made paths in it so that you find your way?

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towering mountains so that people do not get trapped behind such gigantic walls and are able to go beyond them. Another subtle reference which can be derived from this expression is that people should reflect on the power, wisdom, providence and the tremendous favours He has blessed them with and reach the conclusion that it is only the Lord Who has made such elaborate arrangements for them Who is worthy of being shown gratitude to and worshipped and obeyed and if they do not recognize this right of His, there will come Day on which they will be held answerable for their ingratitude.

وَالَّذِیْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءًۢ بِقَدَرٍ ۚ فَاَنْشَرْنَا بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّیْتًا ۚ كَذٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾[9]

And one of the majesties of the all-knowing and all-powerful Lord is that He sent down rain in a particular measure. This sending down of water in a specific amount is a very obvious evidence to the fact that it is not merely produced by the interaction of clouds and winds but as per the verdict of the all-knowing and all-mighty Lord Who in accordance with His wisdom sends down only that amount of rain which can be tolerated by the earth. From this, another deduction that can be made is that in the heavens and the earth the will and intention of one all-knowing and all-mighty Lord prevails. Had this not been the case, how could such harmony have existed between the heavens and the earth that water should descend from the heavens and the earth use it to nurture its potentials. It is further evident from this that the all-knowing and all-powerful Lord is very noble and gracious because He sends down water in a measured amount only. With this measure is related all the blessings of this earth. If some disorder comes about in this, this earth can be destroyed both because of a shortage of water and because of its abundance.

The words فَاَنْشَرْنَا بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّیْتًا ۚ كَذٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُوْنَ direct attention to a special aspect of rain and since this aspect reveals a very great reality of this world, hence it is mentioned in the first person which is used to express great elaboration. The words state that the Almighty revives a dead and a desolate piece of land through this water and it becomes lush green. In a similar manner, man too will rise from this earth after dying and decaying into it.

وَالَّذِیْ خَلَقَ الْاَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ مَا تَرْكَبُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ لِتَسْتَوٗا عَلٰى ظُهُوْرِهٖ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ اِذَا اسْتَوَیْتُمْ عَلَیْهِ وَتَقُوْلُوْا سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِیْ سَخَّرَ لَنَا هٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهٗ مُقْرِنِیْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ وَاِنَّاۤ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾[10]

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9. And Who sent down water from the heavens in a certain measure. Thus We revived through it a dead land. In a similar manner, shall you be taken out of your graves.

10. And Who created all kinds of things and made ships and beasts for you on which you ride so that you sit firm on their backs? Then you recall in mind the favour of the Almighty when you sit on them and say: "Glory be to Him Who put these things to our service and We would

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After mentioning some signs of the providence of the all-knowing and all-powerful God, attention is directed to what they entail – something which every right-natured person should feel and comprehend who is benefiting from them.

The verse says that it is God Who has created these multifarious things. The word اَزْوَاجَ mere means "multifarious" and "diverse." It is used in this meaning abundantly in the Qur'ān and classical Arabic literature. Thus, for example, in the expression مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيْجٍ, it used in this very meaning. Things have been created in variety and in pairs in this world so that man is reminded of the power, wisdom, mercy and providence of the Creator of this world. The arguments adduced by the Qur'ān on monotheism by referring to the harmony found in the individual members of pairs have been explained at relevant places of this exegesis. (٧:٥٠)

The words وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ مَا تَرْكَبُوْنَ mention two specific things after mentioning the general: it is God Who has produced boats and beasts for man as means of transport. At the time of revelation of the Qur'ān, these two means of land and sea transport were very common; hence they have been mentioned. Now, because of advancement of science, many other means of transport have been added to this list but all of them can be subsumed under these two because the science with the help of which man has invented them is a gift of God.

The words لِتَسْتَوٗا عَلٰى ظُهُوْرِهٖ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ اِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُوْلُوْا سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِىْ سَخَّرَ لَنَا هٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهٗ مُقْرِنِيْنَ mention the obligation towards these favours of God: God has made these means of transport for man so that he can benefit from them and recognize the right of He Who has granted them these favours; when they board these means of transport, they should remember the blessing of God that He bestowed these favours on them even though they are not entitled to them; hence, it is not worthy of them to sit on these conveyances and show conceit; at the time of embarking them, they should pray to God: "Glory be to Him Who put these things in our service and We would not have been able to subject them to our control."

In the expression لِتَسْتَوٗا عَلٰى ظُهُوْرِهٖ, though the word ظُهُوْرٌ is not appropriate for boats and collocates more with horses and other animals used for transport, here it is used in the general sense while keeping in view the dominant element. Such usage is common in Arabic. The objective is to point out that whether a person boards a boat or rides a horse, instead of showing conceit, a person should express his gratitude to God. However, horses have been specially mentioned here to warn people that when a rider of a horse passes by a pedestrian, the flames of superiority and conceit ignite in him more so when he has a petty nature – so much so, like the horse, a person's neck stiffens as well. This element has greatly increased in current times with the advent of motor vehicles. There are very few fortunate people who sit decently in cars; their arrogance is evident from every action they make and is evident in such a despicable

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not have been able to subject them to our control. And, indeed, to God shall we return."

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way that it becomes difficult to make out whether he is a human being or some other creature.

In the words سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِیْ سَخَّرَ لَنَا هٰذَا وَ مَا كُنَّا لَهٗ مُقْرِنِیْنَ, the word سُبْحٰنَ is meant to connote the exaltedness of God: He is free from all traces of polytheism and is without any blemish – small or great. Such exaltedness inspires trust and reliance on God, and it is this sentiment which protects a person from conceit, arrogance and misconduct and engenders in him the feelings of gratitude, humility and modesty.

The word اقْرَان means to get the better of one's opponent and to make him submit. The implication is that at that time a person with full humility should confess to His Lord that it is the blessing and graciousness of God because of which this means of transport has been brought under his control otherwise it would not have been possible for him to do so by himself.

It should be kept in mind that this confession and acknowledgement is the acknowledgment of a reality. All things of this world which have been put to our service are under God's authority – without which a person's own plan or strategy cannot make the smallest of things submit to him. Man can harness a camel and a horse through bridles but can he subdue wild beasts and put them to his service. For example, he cannot dare use the lion as a means of transport. It is only God's graciousness that He has created so many animals to serve us, and given us the ability to bring them under our control and use them for various purposes. In recent times, man has been able to bring into his control steam, electricity and the atom because God has given him the ability to do so. These conquests have made man very arrogant and he now regards himself to be the owner of every object of this world. The fact is that whenever God wants, He can liberate these things from man's control and turn them into a means of torment for him instead of mercy.

The supplication which is taught here outwardly relates to the means of transport run by camels and horses; however, this supplication is also appropriate for other developed means of conveyance of these times, for example, cars and aeroplanes etc. However, for sea transport, the Qur'ānic supplication which is more appropriate is the one which is ascribed to Noah (sws) viz. بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ مَجْرٖىهَا وَ مُرْسٰىهَا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّیْ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِیْمٌ. (١١:٤١) (by the name of God is its departing and halting; indeed my Lord is forgiving and merciful, (11:41)).

وَ اِنَّاۤ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُوْنَ: Just as earlier on, the words لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ are very meaningful, similarly, here these words are very subtle, meaningful and shed light on a very important aspect of the philosophy of religion: while boarding a conveyance, a person should not merely keep in mind that he is going from a certain city to another; he should also bear in mind that one day he will be definitely returning to God and coming to His presence. The occasion of this reminder is that every favour is a testimony to God being the sustainer, and this in turn necessitates that the Lord one day gather everyone and hold them accountable for the favours He gave them and then duly reward those who

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used them in the right manner and take revenge from those who made these favours a means of their rebelliousness and transgression. This accountability and reward and punishment is a necessary outcome of God's providence. In short, these words present a beautiful example of the discourse shifting from one reality to another. Scores of such examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

وَجَعَلُوْا لَهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ جُزْءًا ؕ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَكَفُوْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۱۵﴾[11]

This verse is connected to verse 9 above. After verse 9, verses of insertion (*taḍmīn*) from God had begun and thus no comment was made on the contradictions which the confessors had in their views. Now this verse is a comment on these contradictions. In other words, the complete sense would be that on the one hand is the confession of these people that God only is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and on the other hand they have made some servants of God His part ie made His partners. This belief of theirs is against what they acknowledge. If God is the creator of all the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, then everything is His creation; so how can anything be a part of Him? To be a part of Him would mean that something has originated from His being and then as a necessary consequence also be His peer and equal. After affirming this, how can God be regarded as one and alone? Here it needs to be kept in mind that there were some deities of the idolaters which they regarded to be partners of God in His attributes and rights and others who were His partners in His being. For example, they regarded the angels to be favoured daughters of God; worshipping them would become a means of their intercession and their own salvation. Here the Qur'ān has refuted this claim of theirs that everything other than God is His creation. Nothing has the status of being His part. It is man's utter ungratefulness that he has got everything from God alone yet he makes other his deities and sings their praises and worships them.

A little deliberation will show that this verse refutes the belief of *waḥdah al-wujūd* whose real originators are Hindu philosophers but a group of our *sūfīs* are guilty of introducing it into Islam. As a result of this belief, everything of this universe assumes to be a part of God. So if making angels to be part of God is polytheism, how can regarding all the universe to be part of God be regarded as monotheism.

اَمِ اتَّخَذَ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ بَنٰتٍ وَّاَصْفٰىكُمْ بِالْبَنِيْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾ وَاِذَا بُشِّرَ اَحَدُهُمْ بِمَا ضَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهٗ مُسْوَدًّا وَّهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۷﴾[12]

The word اَمِ connotes disgust and amazement. The belief of the Idolaters of Arabia

11. And these people assign a part of their servants to Him. Indeed, man is an open ingrate.

12. Did He choose daughters for Himself from His creations and gave you sons? And when any of them is given glad tidings of that which He regards as an attribute of God, His face darkens and He remains depressed.

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regarding angels as daughters of God is criticized here from another angle. The previous verse refuted them to be part of God. In this verse, the baseless nature of this belief is explicated through a psychological aspect: it is not merely unfair that they regard His own creation to be His part, even more unfair is the fact that they regard daughters to be very detestable but feel no shame in ascribing them to God. Some one should ask them if it is only God Who creates everyone, why would He favour daughters for Himself when their own situation is that when any of them is given the news of a daughter's birth, his face turns bleak and he becomes very anxious?

The implication is that not only have they not used sense and reason to fabricate this belief, they have also belied the sense of decency which is an obvious requirement of human nature. If they are not able to understand that God has no partners, they should at least have been just enough to not ascribe something to God which they themselves hate and detest. By inventing this belief, they have not only humiliated sense and reason, but also shown their disregard of the sense of justice.

اَوَمَنْ يُّنَشَّؤُا فِي الْحِلْيَةِ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِيْنٍ ﴿١٨﴾[13]

This is an expression of the feelings which arise in them upon hearing the news of a daughter's birth and make them feel clogged-up. The verse says that they start thinking that has she come into being who grows up around adornments and is absolutely speechless in areas of expressing superiority.

The word خِصَامٍ encompasses both *mubārazat* (challenging a soldier for a solo fight before a battle) and *mufākharat* (expressing superiority over others) and Arabs of the *jāhiliyyah* period were fond of both. Every now and then wars would erupt between them and competitions would also be held in which the orators and poets of each tribe would express superiority and pre-eminence and try to outdo each other in this. Obviously, women were inferior in both these areas. Neither would a woman take part in battles by wearing armor and carrying weapons nor was she of any stature in poetry and oratory. For this reason, she was of little importance in the eyes of the Arabs, and this is not merely specific to the Arabs only. In these times too, the importance women have gained relates much to gatherings where showing off and embellishments are important. As far *mubārazat* and *mufākharat* are concerned, she is still at the same level as she was in Arab *jāhiliyyah.* Here, it should be kept in mind that this comment on women is not from God; it is from the people of Arabia who would regard angels to be the daughters of God. Our exegetes generally regard this to be a comment from God. This misunderstanding has arisen because people have not reflected on the context of the discourse.

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13. That is she born who is reared among trinkets and is not able to converse in expressing superiority?

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وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عِبٰدُ الرَّحْمٰنِ اِنَاثًا ؕ اَشَهِدُوْا خَلْقَهُمْ ؕ سَتُكْتَبُ شَهَادَتُهُمْ وَيُسْـَٔلُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾[14]

Their notion under discussion is refuted from another angle. They are asked: What is their basis of regarding these angels as women? Were they present when the Almighty created the angels? After this, they are threatened in a very stern manner that this claim of theirs shall be noted down and one day they will be asked about it. This whole discussion about the angels was also discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt earlier. Those who would like to know more details may look it up.

وَقَالُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ الرَّحْمٰنُ مَا عَبَدْنٰهُمْ ؕ مَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ اَمْ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ كِتٰبًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ فَهُمْ بِهٖ مُسْتَمْسِكُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾[15]

The religious argument which the idolaters would put forth in support of this foolish concept of theirs is cited here. They contended that their mere worshipping them shows that God likes this worship. Had the Almighty not liked this, He has power over everything; He could have stopped them and they would have not been able to worship them. In response to this, the Qur'ān says that this is mere speculative talk; they have no knowledge of this matter. It is not the right way to gauge the liking of God by seeing how much respite a person or a group has been given to do some evil. If this is an argument, then it can be presented in favour in fact praise by every thief, adulterer and ruffian for his theft and hooliganism, and he can say that had this been against the will of God, He would have forcibly stopped them; since He has not stopped them from it, then it only means that whatever they are doing is liked by Him.

The words اَمْ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ كِتٰبًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ فَهُمْ بِهٖ مُسْتَمْسِكُوْنَ state the reliable way of knowing the likes and dislikes of God is His Books and the teaching of His prophets. So has God given them a Book prior to the Qur'ān which they can present in their support? If this is not so and obviously cannot be so, then on what authority do they claim that what they are doing has God's permission.

بَلْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا وَجَدْنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا عَلٰٓى اُمَّةٍ وَّاِنَّا عَلٰٓى اٰثٰرِهِمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾[16]

Earlier, a religious argument of the idolaters was refuted. A deliberation on it will

14. And they regard the angels who are the servants of the Most Gracious to be daughters. Were they present at their birth? This testimony of theirs has been noted, and they shall be questioned.

15. And they say: "Had God willed, we would never have worshipped them." They have no knowledge in this; they are only wildly guessing. Have We given them a scripture before this so that they derive an argument from it?

16. In fact, they say: "We found our ancestors on a practice and we are merely walking in their footsteps."

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reveal that the idolaters were deceived in the same manner as the fatalists of today. Cited in this verse is their traditional argument on which they relied the most. Since this argument is based on blind following one's ancestors which relates to emotions instead of intellect, so the miscreants of every period have used this weapon to their advantage and by inciting the emotions of the masses have tried to stop the reformatory efforts of the reformers.

The word اُمَّةٍ means the collective behaviour or mannerism of a community, as has been explained at an appropriate place. The verse states that these people bring forth the argument in their favour that they found their ancestors on a right viewpoint and on a superior way, and would contend that since they are followers of their viewpoint, they are rightly guided and following their ancestors would guarantee they being rightly guided; if they deviate from their path even slightly, then they would deviate from the path of guidance; hence people who are trying to make them deviate from this path are only after their ruin.

It needs to be kept in mind that the word اُمَّةٌ occurs as an indefinite noun to connote its majesty and grandeur.

وَكَذٰلِكَ مَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ فِىۡ قَرۡيَةٍ مِّنۡ نَّذِيۡرٍ اِلَّا قَالَ مُتۡرَفُوۡهَآ ۙ اِنَّا وَجَدۡنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا عَلٰٓى اُمَّةٍ وَّاِنَّا عَلٰٓى اٰثٰرِهِمۡ مُّقۡتَدُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ قٰلَ اَوَلَوۡ جِئۡتُكُمۡ بِاَهۡدٰى مِمَّا وَجَدۡتُّمۡ عَلَيۡهِ اٰبَآءَكُمۡ ؕ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا بِمَآ اُرۡسِلۡتُمۡ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾[17]

The verse says that just as these people are blind followers in the matter of their religion, similarly, they are blind followers of the rejecters of the previous prophets in the matter of reasoning. Before Muḥammad (sws) whichever warner was sent to a nation, the arrogant among them responded to his calls of warning and reformation by saying that they found their forefathers on a specific viewpoint and that they shall remain strong adherents to their viewpoint. When that messenger asked them whether they will still remain so if he brings a better alternative to them, in response, they angrily said that they were rejecters of all that he has brought.

Two things become evident from the words: اِنَّا بِمَآ اُرۡسِلۡتُمۡ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوۡنَ.

One, they said these words annoyingly and in desperation. This is because the answer is way ahead of the question. The question posed by the messenger was that if the viewpoint to which he is calling them to is better than the one they found their forefathers on, will they still cling to it in stubbornness. In reply, they said that they are rejecters of all what he says. In other words, the issue is not concerning what is the guided path or not, they are not ready to even listen and accept what he is telling them.

17. And, in this manner, whenever We sent a warner to a settlement, its affluence people remarked: "We have found our ancestors on a practice and We shall keep following their footsteps." The warner said: "What if I bring to you something which gives more guidance than what you found your ancestors on, will you still follow them?" They replied: "We reject everything with which you have been sent."

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Two, the ability to distinguish between guidance and misguidance has been innately endowed by the Almighty in man on the condition that man has a conscience which is alive; he is not stubborn, arrogance and obdurate.

فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾[18]

The verse implies that when the stubbornness and arrogance of nations reached the limit that they refused to listen and accept the calls of the messengers, the Almighty sought revenge from them for this ungrateful attitude. Then it should be seen what fate the rejecters of the messengers met.

Section II: Verses (26-45)

The succeeding verses mention the migration and declaration of acquittal of Abraham (sws) from polytheism. The purpose is to express the fact that absolutely baseless is the claim of the Quraysh that the religion of polytheism which they are following has been inherited by them from their forefathers. The fact is that their real ancestor is Abraham (sws) who left his people because of polytheism, and the tradition of his migration and of his declaration of acquittal is found even today in both branches of its progeny. Then on what basis is the Quraysh saying that they are following the path of their ancestors.

After referring to this historical fact the real reason of the rebelliousness of the Quraysh is highlighted and the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should adhere to his preaching; the real way of the messengers is the one he is calling people to; if God wants, He can pass His verdict between the Prophet (sws) and his opponents, but according to His established practice He gives respite till a certain time to the enemies of the truth.

In the light of this background, readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖٓ اِنَّنِيْ بَرَآءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْ فَطَرَنِيْ فَاِنَّهٗ سَيَهْدِيْنِ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةًۢ بَاقِيَةً
فِيْ عَقِبِهٖ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ بَلْ مَتَّعْتُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَاٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ وَرَسُوْلٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ قَالُوْا
هٰذَا سِحْرٌ وَّاِنَّا بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٣١﴾ اَهُمْ يَقْسِمُوْنَ رَحْمَتَ
رَبِّكَ ؕ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيْشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا
سُخْرِيًّا ؕ وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَّكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ لِبُيُوْتِهِمْ

18. So, We took revenge from them; then see what fate those who disbelieved met.

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سُقُفًا مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ وَّ مَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلِبُيُوْتِهِمْ اَبْوَابًا وَّ سُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَّكِئُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَزُخْرُفًا ؕ وَاِنْ كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ لَمَّا
مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَالْاٰخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهٗ شَيْطٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهٗ قَرِيْنٌ
﴿٣٦﴾ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّوْنَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ وَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَنَا قَالَ يٰلَيْتَ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ
الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَبِئْسَ الْقَرِيْنُ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَلَنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ اِذْ ظَّلَمْتُمْ اَنَّكُمْ فِى الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اَفَاَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ اَوْ
تَهْدِى الْعُمْىَ وَمَنْ كَانَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَاِمَّا نَذْهَبَنَّ بِكَ فَاِنَّا مِنْهُمْ مُّنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ اَوْ نُرِيَنَّكَ الَّذِىْ وَعَدْنٰهُمْ
فَاِنَّا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّقْتَدِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَاسْتَمْسِكْ بِالَّذِىْٓ اُوْحِىَ اِلَيْكَ ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَذِكْرٌ لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ ۚ
وَسَوْفَ تُسْـَٔلُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَسْـَٔلْ مَنْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُّسُلِنَآ اَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِ الرَّحْمٰنِ اٰلِهَةً يُّعْبَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And recall when Abraham said to his father and to his people: "I renounce what you worship. I only worship Him Who created me. So, indeed, He alone will guide me." He left this as an abiding tradition among his descendants so that people may turn to it alone. (26-28)

In fact, what happened was that I granted them and their forefathers worldly benefits until there came to them the truth and a messenger who explains. And when the truth came to them, they said: "This is sorcery and we reject it." (29-30)

And they objected: "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed to some prominent person of the two cities?" Is it they who apportion your Lord's blessings? We have allocated among them their livelihood in this world and have raised some in status above others so that they can mutually serve each other. And better is your Lord's mercy than what they are amassing. (31-32)

Had it not been for the fact that people might have adopted one path, We would have made the house roofs of those who have rejected the Most Gracious Lord of silver and their stairways also through which they climb roofs, and also their doors and their couches on which they recline. And We could have made these into gold as well. And these things are only provisions of worldly life and the life to come is reserved by your Lord for the virtuous. (33-35).

And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion. And they stop him from the path of God and they think that they are rightly guided. Until when he comes to Us, he will say: "Would that I and you were as far apart as both borders of the East." So what an evil companion he will be. And when you have been unjust to your souls, the thought that you will share the torment with one another will not benefit you the slightest. (36-39)

So will you make the deaf hear or guide the blind or those in open error? Thus either We will take you way and take revenge from them or let you see what We have promised them. Hence We have full power over them. Therefore hold fast to that which is revealed to you. Indeed, you are on a straight path. And this is a reminder for you and for your people and soon you all shall be questioned. And ask the messengers

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whom We sent before you: "Did we set up gods other than the merciful Lord to be worshipped."

Explanation

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖٓ اِنَّنِيْ بَرَآءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ۙ﴿۲۶﴾[19]

The word بَرَآءٌ is a verbal noun used as an adjective. When a verbal noun is used as an adjective an element of exaggeration is incorporated in it. An example of this is زَيْدٌ عَدْلٌ (Zayd is justice). Thus the words: اِنَّنِيْ بَرَآءٌ would mean "I am totally absolved of you and there is no relationship left between you and me."

This is a reference to the declaration of acquittal made by Abraham (sws) and has been mentioned in detail in the previous *sūrahs*, and the purpose of its mention as I have referred to earlier is to make evident to the Quraysh the reality when they in support of their polytheism allude to their ancestors why do they forget their real ancestor who because of the very reason of detesting polytheism left his father and his people and took his progeny to a desolate and barren valley and settled them there. The implication is that if they are proud of the religion of their ancestors, then the greatest of their ancestors is Abraham (sws) because of whose blessings they were able to reap favours both in the corporal world and in their religion; so why did they adopt the ways of these ignorant while leaving aside the ways of Abraham (sws) – the ignorant who made them deviate from the religion of the real elder of the family and threw them in the abyss of polytheism.

This declaration of acquittal by Abraham (sws) was made foremost before his father as is evident from the words: وَ اِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ لِاَبِيْهِ. In them, there is a warning to the Quraysh: if they contemplate they will realize that the real inheritance left by Abraham (sws) for them is not polytheism while blindly following their forefathers; it is rather of abhorrence to his forefathers who were inflicted with polytheism.

اِلَّا الَّذِيْ فَطَرَنِيْ فَاِنَّهٗ سَيَهْدِيْنِ ﴿۲۷﴾[20]

The exception mentioned in this sentence is from the words مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ. Just as the idolaters of Arabia would worship God but would also ascribe partners to Him, in a similar manner, the nation of Abraham (sws) too did not disbelieve in God; it imputed partners to Him. Through this declaration, Abraham (sws) made it evident to his nation that the other deities they have set up with God are absolutely baseless and that he worships God and will do so in future because God is His creator and is thereby worthy of worship.

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19. And recall when Abraham said to his father and to his people: "I renounce what you worship."

20. "I only worship Him Who created me. So, indeed, He alone will guide me."

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The words فَاِنَّهٗ سَيَهْدِيْنِ relate to Abraham's declaration of acquittal. Its implied meaning is that the declaration of acquittal he is making is a very difficult one; he is aware of its hardships but he is hopeful that the God for Whom he is undertaking such danger will guide him in these hardships.

وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةًۢ بَاقِيَةً فِيْ عَقِبِهٖ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾[21]

The antecedent of the accusative pronoun in جَعَلَهَا is the declaration of acquittal and migration which is mentioned earlier. The occurrence of such pronouns can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

The words كَلِمَةًۢ بَاقِيَةً mean an abiding tradition. In other words, Abraham (sws) through his words, deeds and teachings implanted his declaration of acquittal as a firm tradition among his progeny. The predecessors would continue to urge and stress upon their successors to transfer it and keep it alive. In one of the branches of Abraham's progeny, the Israelites, it was kept alive through their scriptures and through the teachings and reminders of their prophets. Since in its other branch, the Ishmaelites, prophets were not sent, it became very weak; however, even in them, there remained a group who were the followers of the religion of Abraham (sws), bearers of his call to monotheism and custodians of his tradition of abhorrence towards polytheism.

The words لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ imply that this tradition was left among his progeny so that it continue to be a sign-post to them: whenever Satan tries to inveigle them or if they deviate from the right path, they can come back to it by observing the sign-post.

بَلْ مَتَّعْتُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَاٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ وَرَسُوْلٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ قَالُوْا هٰذَا سِحْرٌ وَّاِنَّا بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾[22]

The word الْحَقُّ refers to the Qur'ān and after اٰبَآءَهُمْ words to the effect فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ are suppressed because of contextual indication. In Sūrah al-Ḥadīd verse sixteen these words can be found in exactly the same context. Moreover, in verse 44 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā' also this topic is discussed in the following words: بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَ اٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ (٢١:٤٤) (and We blessed them and their forefathers with the favours of this world till a great period of time passed on these circumstances, (21:44)).

The implication is that it is mere lame and frivolous talk on their part that they are opposing the Qur'ān because it calls them to what is against the religion of their ancestors. The real reason of their opposition is that the Almighty blessed them and

21. He left this as an abiding tradition among his descendants so that people may turn to it alone.

22. In fact, what happened was that I granted them and their forefathers worldly benefits until there came to them the truth and a messenger who explains. And when the truth came to them, they said: "This is sorcery and we reject it."

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their forefathers with the favours of this world and a great amount of time has passed over this opulence which has hardened their hearts. Now that there has come to them the Qur'ān and a messenger who is revealing the reality to them, this message is weighing heavily on them. They think that accepting it would put their worldly interests into danger. For this reason they regard it to be sorcery in order to disillusion the masses from it.

There was a specific aspect of the Quraysh calling the Qur'ān as sorcery to which I have alluded at any appropriate place: if some reality becomes apparent in the right words it definitely affects the hearts. Since the Qur'ān is nothing but the truth as is evident from the word and its style is also inimitable, it naturally influences the hearts of people who are not selfish and who like the leaders of the Quraysh were not fearful of the fact that the appearance of this reality is a danger to their leadership. In order to stop such people from getting influenced by the Qur'ān, the Quraysh could not have said that the Qur'ān is a worthless and a meaningless book. If they had said so, their own masses would have regarded them to be foolish because this not convincing a comment at all. However, they would try to convince their masses that the eloquence and articulacy found in the Qur'ān is not because it is divine, as is the claim of its presenter; it is merely a magic of words in which its presenter is adept like their own poets and orators. In other words, they would try that people are not led to believe that the Qur'ān is a revelation from God but are led to believe that it is of the category of the composition of their poets and discourses of their orators.

وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٣١﴾[23]

In order to disillusion the masses from the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws), these leaders of the Quraysh would also say that if this book has been revealed by God, then why is not sent down to some great chief of Makkah or Ṭā'if. The words مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ (of the two cities) refer to Makkah and Ṭā'if because it was these two cities who were the centre of the nobles and chiefs of the Arabs. For generations, they were the leaders and of the Arabs. Thus the simpletons could be easily led to believe that if God really wanted to reveal something to guide people, He would have revealed it to the affluent people of these cities; leaving them aside, why would He choose a person who is not only poor, but the son of a poor person and the rich would seldom be prepared to even listen to what he has to say.

اَهُمْ يَقْسِمُوْنَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ ؕ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيْشَتَهُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ

23. And they objected: "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed to some prominent person of the two cities?"

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بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا ؕ وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾[24]

This verse is a response to the haughtiness of the arrogant leaders of the Quraysh: what they say shows that they have monopoly on all the favours of God, and they alone have the authority to a favour to someone they want and deprive anyone they want to from it. The fact is that the resources and riches the Quraysh have been blessed with are because of the distribution from God; they have not obtained them by themselves. If they had obtained them by themselves, then why would there exist a difference of level and status in between these rich; if a person has the authority, how can he be content on being less rich in some aspect than others. This difference in status – which is against their own desire – is a clear evidence to the fact that they are not the ones in whose hands lies this distribution; in fact, it is in the hands of someone else Who according to His discretion and wisdom gives more to whomsoever He wants to and gives less to whomsoever He wants to.

لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا. The expression فُلَانٌ اِتَّخَذَ فُلَانًا سُخْرِيًّا would mean that such and such a person put such and such a person into his service.

These words express the wisdom behind granting different levels to different people viz a viz their mental and material resources and abilities: in order that people spend a life of mutual co-operation and put one another in the service of one another.

It should remain evident here that the Almighty has made this world for trial and test. For this reason, He has created its system in such a manner that every person is dependent on another in some way. The greatest of kings is dependent on others and the humblest of people are needed by others. No one is self-sufficient and can live in absolute independence. Similarly, there is no one who does not have some utility in the society. A little deliberation shows that the Creator of the heavens and earth has not created everyone with the same abilities, equal intelligence, similar tastes and same status viz a viz their means and resources; on the contrary, there exists a great difference between people in these matters. This difference develops the society in such way that on the one hand there exist in a society brilliant scholars, famous writers, exceptional researchers, renowned thinkers and powerful rulers and on the other hand, we find workers who till the soil and labour in factories, porters who transport goods on their backs, vigilant servants and janitors who clean streets and canals. All these elements are essential in fact indispensable for the development of a society. All provide different types of services; none of them is less in importance than the other and none can be ignored either. In fact, in order that the machine of this society functions properly, it is essential to look after the smallest of its spare parts in proportion to the benefit it provides.

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[24]. Is it they who apportion your Lord's blessings? We have allocated among them their livelihood in this world and have raised some in status above others so that they can mutually serve each other. And better is your Lord's mercy than what they are amassing.

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By creating this world such that people have different status and positions in it, the Almighty is testing how those who are more talented and resourceful are using their talents and resources. After benefiting from them, have they been inflicted with arrogance, selfishness, forcibly imposing themselves on others and disobeying the Creator of the worlds or show gratefulness, obedience and sympathy to other creatures? Similarly, He is also judging those with less worldly means and resources whether they recognize their responsibilities in their spheres of life, fear their Creator and protect their self-esteem and honour or after being negligent of their duties are overcome with the evil notion of defeating those who are their rulers and superiors.

If the first of these situations arises, then because of the noble co-operation of the high and the low, a noble society comes into being, and all its components without any distinction receive respect in this world and in the Hereafter too each will be rewarded in accordance with its services and purity of intention. If the second situation arises, then the system of the society gradually gives way to disorder and then finally annihilates. In the Hereafter too, its small or big elements become worthy of God's wrath in proportion to their misconduct and negligence.

In these times, people who are inflicted with the craze of obliterating class differences in a society cannot succeed in their intent unless they are able to make people equal in their mental, temperamental, natural and practical abilities, and this is impossible. Nations who went on the rampage to achieve this aim also ended up in the situation that simultaneously with the arrogant powerful elements, there existed in their society menial people who would polish their boots and sweep their streets. If they succeed in making this impossible as possible and thus are able to equalize the whole society viz a viz their abilities and mental and material resources, then the basis of mutual cooperation will finish and anarchy will spread in the society. When every person will have in him the ability to become a Lenin or a Stalin why would he content himself in becoming Lenin's or Mao's driver or their servant who clean their shoes? Everyone would then like to become God and in the presence of so many gods who can imagine what will happen to this world.

وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَّكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ لِبُيُوْتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ وَّمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَلِبُيُوْتِهِمْ اَبْوَابًا وَّسُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَّكِئُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾[25]

Here just as the words مِنْ فِضَّةٍ occur after سُقُفًا, they should also occur after مَعَارِجَ and اَبْوَابًا and سُرُرٌ. However, as per linguistic principles of eloquent Arabic they are suppressed because there is a strong indication of its presence.

25. Had it not been for the fact that people might have adopted one path, We would have made the house roofs of those who have rejected the Most Gracious Lord of silver and their stairways also through which they climb roofs, and also their doors and their couches on which they recline.

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Now in these verses, the lack of reality in worldly things is being made evident – things which had made the disbelievers so arrogant that they became infatuated with the notion that when they have all the majesty and power of this world, then how is it possible that God reveal a Book and reveal it to someone other than themselves.

These verses say that the resources and assets of life of which they are very proud have no reality in the eyes of God. Had it not been the case that people would adhere to the same view, the Almighty would have made the roofs, staircases, doors and sofas of silver but He did not do this because this would have made the trial very severe: when the masses would have seen that those who have disbelieved in God have so much, they too would have adopted the path of disbelief; the very fortunate may have been able to protect their faith. In order to shield the masses from this trial the Almighty has blessed the believers and the disbelievers with worldly riches; however, the disbelievers will have no share in the Hereafter.

The statement that people would have stuck to the same view is not given as a principle; it is given with regard to generality and the majority. Obviously, if worldly riches had only been given to the disbelievers, very few would have remained as believers – however, even if a few, there would have been some believers. Such is the nature on which the Almighty has created man that there would have been some noble souls who would succeed in the severest of trials and would have passed through the sea of fire without forsaking God.

وَزُخْرُفًا ؕ وَاِنْ كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَالْاٰخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾[26]

The word زُخْرُفًا also connotes "embellishment" and also "gold" which is a means of embellishment. Grammatically, it can be regarded to be coordinated to the syntactical status of مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ and can also be regarded to be the object of a suppressed verb ie. لَجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ زُخْرُفًا. There would not be much difference in either of these. That is if God wanted He could have made all the aforementioned things to be of gold or assemble for them heaps of gold.

The word لَمَّا here does not mean اِلَّا. It is in place of ل which comes to distinguish the shortened (*mukhaffafah*) أنْ from the negative (*nāfiyah*) أنْ. At times this ل is transformed into لَمَّا for the purpose of filling the sonic vacuum. A similar example can be seen in the following verse of Sūrah al-Ṭāriq: (٤:٨٦) اِنْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ (indeed, every soul has a guardian over it, (86:4)). It was originally as: اِنْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَعَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ. However, this leaves a sonic vacuum. Thus in order to keep the rhythm intact the letter ل is transformed into لَمَّا, as per the accepted practice of the native Arabs. There are several examples of such additions in letters; however, occasion does not allow us to go into details.

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26. And We could have made these into gold as well. And these things are only provisions of worldly life and the life to come is reserved by your Lord for the virtuous.

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The implied meaning is that these things with which people are infatuated are merely transient. The real everlasting favours will be granted in the Hereafter, and before the Prophet's Lord, the Hereafter solely belongs to those who fear God.

وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهٗ شَيْطٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهٗ قَرِيْنٌ ﴿٣٦﴾[27]

All their doubts and objections are artificial. The fact is that these people have shown complete indifference to the remembrance of God, and as per the established practice of God a devil is deputed by God on people who turn away from His remembrance who becomes their abiding companion; he does not leave them until he leads them to Hell.

The expression عشا عن الشیئ means "to show indifference to something". It is a trait of the heart of a human being that as long as the remembrance of God inhabits it, Satan cannot find any way into it; but when a person becomes indifferent to God, Satan slowly vanquishes it, and when he does so, it is not easy to escape from his grasp. Satan is able to raise doubts and objections against the best of advice and reminders that come before a person thereby disillusioning him from it. However, Satan is not able to find a way into people who are able to drench their hearts with the remembrance of God, and if ever because of some negligence on their part if Satan is able to find his way into them, he is not able to abide their for long; as soon as a person realizes what has happened, Satan has to run away from there.

وَاِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّوْنَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ وَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾[28]

In the previous verses, since the word مَنْ is not specific in nature, it can be used both for singular and plural entities. Moreover, the word شَيْطَان (satan) is also used in the general sense. It can refer to both the satans among men and among the jinn. For this reason, in the verse under discussion, the pronouns used are in the plural form. Here, the situation of a whole group is being mentioned. It is said that people who in this way come in the grasp of Satan, their ultimate fate is that they are stopped by satans from the treading the correct path but these people who have been lured away think that they are on the correct path.

Here the dispersion (*intishār*) found in the pronouns is also worthy of attention. The antecedent of the pronoun in اِنَّهُمْ is the satans and the subject of the verb يَحْسَبُوْنَ is the people who are caught in the trap of stans. In a discourse, whose meaning is evident, such dispersion in pronouns is not a defect. A very evident example of this is found in the following verse of Sūrah Yūsuf:

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27. And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion.

28. And they stop him from the path of God and they think that they are rightly guided.

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حَتّٰٓى اِذَا اسْتَيْـَٔسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُوْا جَآءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا. (۱۲:۱۱۰)

Until when the messengers are left with no hope in their nation embracing faith and the people of their nation start thinking that they were falsely threatened with punishment, then comes Our help to the messengers. (12:110).

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَنَا قَالَ يٰلَيْتَ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَبِئْسَ الْقَرِيْنُ ﴿۳۸﴾[29]

The implication is that such companions and friends have very good relations in this world, but in the Hereafter they will appear before God and the consequence of this friendship will come before them. Then whoever would have ruined his fate by being lured away by Satan, he will curse his companion and would express the wish that he had been as far apart from him as the two Easts.

The words فَبِئْسَ الْقَرِيْنُ are an expression of curse and hate from the Almighty for the evil companion meaning what a bad companion is he who ultimately pushed his friend into the pit.

Our exegetes have generally interpreted the word الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ to mean the East and the West.[30] However, in my opinion, this is not correct. At times, in Arabic the dual connotes the vastness of both sides of a thing. Similar, is the use of the plural on certain occasions. As examples in the Qur'ān, the words مشرقين and مغربين and مشارق and مغارب are used in this sense. They have been explained at their relevant places.[31]

وَلَنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ اِذْ ظَّلَمْتُمْ اَنَّكُمْ فِى الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُوْنَ ﴿۳۹﴾[32]

The expression اِذْ ظَّلَمْتُمْ implies اَنْفُسَكُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا اِذْ ظَّلَمْتُمْ.

When this altercation between those who led astray and those were led astray will take place, it will be declared to them on behalf of the Almighty that when in the previous world they had wronged their souls after becoming followers and leaders of one another and were not prepared to think of the fate this will lead them to, then what assurance can they now receive after hurling curses on one another? This will not absolve either of them from blame; both will have to bear torment now; so they should bear it; the previous world was the place of these curses but there they remained faithful compatriots of one another; the time which has passed cannot come back to

29. Until when he comes to Us, he will say: "Would that I and you were as far apart as both borders of the East." So what an evil companion he will be.

30. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 129. (*Translator*)

31. For مشرقين and مغربين, see verse 17 of Sūrah al-Raḥmān and for مشارق and مغارب, see verse 40 of Sūrah al-Ma'ārij. (*Translator*)

32. And when you have been unjust to your souls, the thought that you will share the torment with one another will not benefit you.

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them.

اَفَاَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ اَوْ تَهْدِى الْعُمْىَ وَمَنْ كَانَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۴۰﴾[33]

These words sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): his advice and reminders can only be effective on those whose faculties of thinking and comprehension are alive; how can he remind and advise those who are deaf and have made themselves blind.

The implication of the words وَمَنْ كَانَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ is if the reason that people stray into error is that they are not aware of a reality or have little knowledge of it, then there can be a remedy for this; but how is it possible for someone to guide a person who is in open error and is also aware that he is inflicted with this error.

فَاِمَّا نَذْهَبَنَّ بِكَ فَاِنَّا مِنْهُمْ مُّنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿۴۱﴾ اَوْ نُرِيَنَّكَ الَّذِىْ وَعَدْنٰهُمْ فَاِنَّا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّقْتَدِرُوْنَ ﴿۴۲﴾[34]

This is a further statement of assurance to the Prophet (sws). The verse tells him to leave these people who have wronged their souls to themselves; either the Almighty will give death to him and then take revenge from them or the punishment which the Almighty is threatening them with will visit them in the Prophet's presence and he too will witness their fate. The Almighty is fully capable of punishing them. This subject has also been discussed in verse 46 of Sūrah Yūnus and the fortieth verse of Sūrah al-Ra'd. Those who are interested in details can look them up.

فَاسْتَمْسِكْ بِالَّذِىْٓ اُوْحِىَ اِلَيْكَ ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۴۳﴾[35]

The verse implies that in spite of the frivolous talk and opposition of these people, the Prophet (sws) should strongly adhere to his call to monotheism and this Book which is revealed to him. He only is on the right path. The words صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ here particularly refer to the call of monotheism which has been given earlier in this *sūrah*. The implication is that his opponents do not have any argument; they are the advocates of a baseless claim while he is on a strong basis; he should adhere to his stance; soon his opponents will be defeated.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَذِكْرٌ لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ ۚ وَسَوْفَ تُسْـَٔلُوْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾[36]

The verse refers to the fact that this Qur'ān which has been revealed to the Prophet (sws) is a reminder for him as well as for his nation, and one day each person

33. So will you make the deaf hear or guide the blind or those in open error?

34. Thus either We will take you way and take revenge from them or let you see what We have promised them. Hence We have full power over them.

35. Therefore hold fast to that which is revealed to you. Indeed, you are on a straight path.

36. And this is a reminder for you and for your people and soon you all shall be questioned.

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including him will be held accountable. His accountability will be whether he faithfully delivered to people in its original form whatever was revealed to him and what was the response of his people. The accountability of the nation will be about what they have done in spite of the coming of a warner to them. In Sūrah al-A'rāf, this is mentioned in the following words:

فَلَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ. فَلَنَقُصَّنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَّمَا كُنَّا غَآئِبِيْنَ. (٧: ٦-٧)

Thus We shall necessarily ask the people to whom the messengers were sent and will also ask the messengers themselves. Then We will relate their complete tale in the light of complete knowledge. We have not remained absent anywhere. (7:6-7)

The questions and answers with the messengers and their nations are mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān.

The messengers will be asked of the responsibility of communication of divine messages to their respective nations, while these nations will be asked whether they valued the great favour of the Almighty which came to them in the form of the messengers of God. After that, the messengers and their companions will be given the reward they are worthy of, and the rejecters of the messengers will be meted out the punishment they would deserve. These words are an assurance to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) and his companions and are a threat to his opponents: the matter is not going to end today; one day, the whole case will be presented in the court of God and there one will come to know who won and who lost.

وَسْـَٔلْ مَنْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُّسُلِنَآ اَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِ الرَّحْمٰنِ اٰلِهَةً يُّعْبَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾[37]

This verse refutes the claim of the Idolaters that those whom they worship because God has directed them to do so. The verse says that it is the messenger of God from whom the directives of God can be known; so they should ask the messengers who came before the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) if God has set up other deities besides Him who are worthy of worship.

The words وَسْـَٔلْ مَنْ اَرْسَلْنَا are of a subtle style. Obviously the word رُسُل refers to their teachings and Books which reflect their message. This style is often employed in earlier scriptures, and its examples can also be found in the orations of eloquent orators.

37. And ask the messengers whom We sent before you: "Did we set up gods other than the merciful Lord to be worshipped."

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Section III: Verses (46-56)

The succeeding verses concisely mention the account of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh. The objective firstly is to present historical evidence on the revenge of God mentioned in verses 41 and 42 earlier: after a nation denies its messenger, its fate is necessarily decided whether in this own lifetime or after his migration or death. This revenge of God is an established practice of His and no nation has been able to save itself from this grasp. When the ruthless Pharaoh became a prey to this established practice, he and all his army was drowned. His might and power was of no avail to him.

Secondly, this is an example of the fact mentioned in verse 40: people who ruin their faculties of intellect and deliberately adopt the path of error are not guided by any sign. They remain blind after witnessing the greatest of miracles; only God's decision to mete out punishment to them opens their eyes.

Thirdly, this also bears witness to the reality stated in verse 45: all messengers of God called people to the very monotheism the Qur'ān is calling them to. No messenger ever called his people to worship some other deity than God.

Readers may proceed to study the subsequent verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَقَالَ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِذَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا
يَضْحَكُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَمَا نُرِيْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ اِلَّا هِيَ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ اُخْتِهَا ۫ وَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَقَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَ السّٰحِرُ ادْعُ
لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۚ اِنَّنَا لَمُهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ اِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَنَادٰى فِرْعَوْنُ فِيْ قَوْمِهٖ قَالَ
يٰقَوْمِ اَلَيْسَ لِيْ مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَهٰذِهِ الْاَنْهٰرُ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِيْ ۚ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ اَمْ اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ هُوَ مَهِيْنٌ ۙ وَّلَا يَكَادُ
يُبِيْنُ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَلَوْلَآ اُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ اَسْوِرَةٌ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ اَوْ جَآءَ مَعَهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ مُقْتَرِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَاسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهٗ فَاَطَاعُوْهُ ۭ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا
فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَلَمَّآ اٰسَفُوْنَا انْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ سَلَفًا وَّمَثَلًا لِّلْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾

And We sent forth Moses with Our signs to the Pharaoh and his nobles. So he called upon them: "I have come to you as the Messenger of the Lord of the Universe." But when he came to them with Our signs they would make fun of him. And We kept on showing them signs, one greater than the other, and We also seized them with a punishment so that they may take heed. (46-48).

And they requested: "O Sorcerer! Pray for us to your Lord on the basis of the promise He has made you. Now we will definitely be among the ones who are guided." So, when We would put off the punishment from them, they would break their pledge. (49-50)

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And the Pharaoh made a proclamation to his people. "My people! Is the kingdom of Egypt not mine! And these canals which flow beneath my feet! So can't you people see? Therefore, is he better or am I better than this despicable wretch and can also not clearly speak. So, why did this not happen that bracelets of gold would have been sent down to him or angels arrayed in rows accompanied him?" Thus in this manner he befooled his people and they obeyed him. They were a defiant people. So, when they provoked Us, We took revenge from them and drowned them all and made them a tale of the past and an example for others. (51-56)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَقَالَ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾[38]

The word اٰیٰت refers to the signs with which the Almighty equipped Moses (sws) and sent him to the Pharaoh. These included the staff and the white hand among others.

The word مَلَاءٌ refers to the nobles and chiefs of the Pharaoh who would attend his royal court. This word has been explained in the previous *sūrahs*.

The words فَقَالَ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ form the call given by Moses (sws) to the Pharaoh and his people. It is concisely stated here; however, at other instances, it is stated in detail that he informed the Pharaoh and his courtiers that he has been sent by God to them to warn them; God has given him signs and with the directive of God his demand is that he should be allowed to take the Israelites with him for the purpose of worship to a desert situated three days from their place.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِذَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا يَضْحَكُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾[39]

Here, as per contextual indication, this much is suppressed in the discourse that when the Pharaoh and his courtiers heard that Moses (sws) claimed to be a Messenger of the Lord of the worlds, and he also has certain proofs to substantiate this claim, they demanded from him to show the signs. Thus Moses (sws) showed them these signs; however, instead of acknowledging these signs, they made fun of him and regarded them to be tricks and stunts and declared that they have magicians who can show much better tricks then the ones he has showed.

وَمَا نُرِيْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ اِلَّا هِيَ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ اُخْتِهَا ۫ وَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾[40]

As per a conventional rule of grammar, an incomplete verb is suppressed before

38. And We sent forth Moses with Our signs to the Pharaoh and his nobles. So he called upon them: "I have come to you as the Messenger of the Lord of the Universe."

39. But when he came to them with Our signs they would make fun of him.

40. And We kept on showing them signs, one greater the other, and We also seized them with a punishment so that they may take heed.

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نُرِيْهِمْ. The meaning of the word keeping in view this suppression would be: "We kept on showing them one sign greater than the other so that they can turn to God." This is a reference to those signs which descended on them as punishments of warning after the initial ones had been rejected. The purpose was to give some idea to the Pharaoh and his people about the grasp of God and they show inclination to repent. These signs manifested themselves one after the other in the form of various torments, and quite naturally each succeeding sign was more exemplary than its preceding one. However, such was the hard-heartedness of these people that no sign could influence them until they became the targets of the decisive punishment.

وَقَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَ السّٰحِرُ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۚ اِنَّنَا لَمُهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ اِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾[41]

Whenever they were seized by a punishment, they would come running to Moses (sws) and would earnestly request him to pray to his Lord for them to shed this punishment from them and that if this punishment is shed from them they would adopt the right path and will accept what Moses (sws) has said to them. However, when the Almighty would take away the punishment from them, they would break their promise and become adamant on their old ways.

The details of these warning punishments are mentioned in Sūrah al-A'raf. There I have explained each verse in the light of the Torah. I am citing the verses here. For details, their explanation can be looked up.

فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوْفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ اٰيٰتٍ مُّفَصَّلٰتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ. وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۚ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ. فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْزَ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ هُمْ بٰلِغُوْهُ اِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُوْنَ. (۷: ۱۳۳-۱۳۵)

So, We sent on them the floods and locusts and lice and frogs, and blood as elucidated signs; yet they showed arrogance and they are a people criminal. And when a calamity came upon them, they would request: "O Moses! With reference to the promise made with you by God, pray for us. If you remove this calamity from us, we shall definitely accept what you say and let the Israelites go with you." But when We removed the calamity from them for a fixed period which they had to reach, behold! they would break their word! (7:133-135)

Addressing Moses (sws) by the words is not meant to show derision or disrespect to him. In the Egyptian society of those times, magicians and sorcerers held the same

41. And they requested: "O Sorcerer! Pray for us to your Lord on the basis of the promise He has made you. Now we will definitely be among the ones who are guided." So, when We would put off the punishment from them, they would break their pledge.

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status as is held by scholars and Sufis in a society. This address, thus is an address of respect.

The words بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ have already been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-A'rāf. The implication is that since the Almighty has promised that He will grant the prayer of Moses (sws), it shall be accepted if Moses (sws) prays to God with its reference.

The word لَمَّا here means كُلَّمَا. This has also been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-A'rāf. For this reason, the mention of اِذَا which connotes suddenness (*mufājāh*) is very appropriate here.

وَنَادٰى فِرْعَوْنُ فِيْ قَوْمِهٖ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَلَيْسَ لِيْ مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَهٰذِهِ الْاَنْهٰرُ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِيْ ۚ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾[42]

The words وَنَادٰى فِرْعَوْنُ فِيْ قَوْمِهٖ mean that the Pharaoh made a proclamation in his nation. Readers may look up verses 31-35 above in which the following words of the leaders of the Quraysh are cited: وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيْمٍ (And they objected: "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed to some prominent person of the two cities?") Precisely for the same reason, when the Pharaoh saw that the miracles worked by Moses (sws) and the arguments presented by him was shaking the respect and devotion his nation had for him, he made an announcement among his people that the kingdom of Egypt and its running canals are in his possession; so how is it possible that if God wanted to make someone a messenger, it should be someone other than him.

اَمْ اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ هُوَ مَهِيْنٌ ۙ وَّلَا يَكَادُ يُبِيْنُ ﴿٥٢﴾[43]

A part of the discourse is suppressed in this verse. Numerous examples of such suppression before interrogative sentences can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. If this suppression is unveiled, the whole discourse would be something to the effect: When the kingdom of Egypt and its rivers and canals are in my possession, then is this person who is from an enslaved nation and is not even able to articulate his words better than me who is the sole owner of all the treasures and riches of this whole country. In other words, if this is the situation, then what is in this person that God made him a messenger.

The word مَهِيْنٌ refers to the fact that Moses (sws) was the member of a enslaved nation, and the words لَا يَكَادُ يُبِيْنُ refer to the weakness in the speech of Moses (sws). I have explained under the verse: وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِيْ (٢٠:٢٧) (and untie the knot of my tongue, (20:27)) that Moses (sws) was not inflicted with the malady of stammering, as

42. And the Pharaoh made a proclamation to his people. "My people! Is the kingdom of Egypt not mine! And these canals which flow beneath my feet!"

43. "So, can't you people see? Therefore, is he better or am I better than this despicable wretch and can also not clearly speak."

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has been generally understood; however, he was not a forceful orator, and in those times it was essential that if a person was to gain public prominence he had to be prominent either in sorcery, poetry, oratory or in some other thing. The Pharaoh censured Moses (sws) on this weakness of his that on the one hand, he is the member of an enslaved nation and on the other hand, he is not an orator; so how can such a person claim leadership while challenging him.

فَلَوْلَآ اُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ اَسْوِرَةٌ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ اَوْ جَآءَ مَعَهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ مُقْتَرِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾[44]

These words form part of the Pharaoh's speech: if Moses (sws) claims that there is a God Who has sent him as His Messenger, then it should have been the case that bracelets of gold should have been sent down to embellish him and the angels should have walked in groups alongside him; however, such is the poverty-stricken state of this claimant of being God's envoy and his pennilessness is evident before all and sundry; why should God's messenger come in such a state of indigence.

It may be kept in consideration here that in those times kings, particularly of Egypt and Persia would wear gold bracelets to display their grandeur and majesty and appearing in the company of army bands was also a norm of royal grandeur just as it is today.

فَاسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهٗ فَاَطَاعُوْهُ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾[45]

The word is اِسْتَخَفَّ the opposite of اِسْتَثْقَلَ. اِسْتِثْقَالٌ means to regard something as heavy, burdensome and big. Thus اِسْتِخْفَافٌ would mean to regard something to have no weight and status and to be insignificant. The expression اسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهٗ would mean that he found his nation to be simpletons and lured them away, and like fools it was entrapped by him.

The words اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ imply that these people were disobedient to God and deprived of belief in Him. Thus had no weight and were insignificant. Satan easily gets hold of such people and Satan leads them to any place he wants to. A person becomes weighty by his relationship with God. If this weight is not in the scale of his balance, then his status is no more than of rubbish; a light gust of wind will blow it away.

فَلَمَّآ اٰسَفُوْنَا انْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾[46]

The word آسَفَهُ means اَغْضَبَهُ; ie he angered him. The verse says that when they

44. "So, why did this not happen that bracelets of gold would have been sent down to him or angels arrayed in rows accompanied him?"

45. Thus in this manner he befooled his people and they obeyed him. They were a defiant people.

46. So, when they provoked Us, We took revenge from them.

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angered God because of their misdeeds, the Almighty also finally took His revenge and had all of them drowned. It may be borne in mind that the Pharaoh followed Moses (sws) with all his military might and all his nobles and chiefs; for this reason, the torment engulfed all of them.

فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ سَلَفًا وَّ مَثَلًا لِّلْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾[47]

The actual meaning of the word سَلَف is "to pass." From here, it came to be used for people who have passed away. The سَلَف can be good and they can be evil. Here it refers to the latter meaning. The implied meaning would be: We destroyed them in such a manner that they became an ancient tale. This same meaning is implied by the words جَعَلْنَاهُمْ اَحَادِيْثَ at some instances in the Qur'ān. [48] This verse actually warns the Quraysh that if they follow the ways of the Pharaoh and his people, then they too shall be destroyed and they will become a tale of the ancients.

In the expression مَثَلًا لِّلْاٰخِرِيْنَ the word مَثَل means "an example and a sample." Examples can be good and they can be bad. Here it is the latter and for this reason it means an example that teaches a lesson. The expression would mean: We made them such an evil example that people could learn a lesson about the fate of those who show arrogance before God.

Section IV: Verses (57-65)

For the very purpose the account of Abraham (sws) and Moses (sws) were related earlier, a part of the account of Jesus (sws) is mentioned concisely in the succeeding verses: he too called people towards monotheism but those who claimed to be his followers were afflicted with religious innovations and they fabricated these innovations as blatant defiance of his teachings and elevated him to the status of god.

The account of Jesus (sws) begins with the mention of the fact that if the name of Jesus (sws) is taken, the quarrelsome elements among the Quraysh work up the mischief that this person praises Jesus (sws) whereas their own deities are better than Jesus (sws) because they are angels and daughters of God whereas Jesus (sws) is born of Mary. In this manner, they would befool their followers that if the Qur'ān mentions him, it mentions him in the capacity of son of God the way Christians believe and mentions him to call upon people to worship him. The fact is that the Qur'ān mentions him as a servant of God and His messenger; he too called people towards the same monotheism towards which other prophets of God called. However, these miscreants who are fond of indulging in polemic debates want to create mischief from simple

47. And drowned them all and made them a tale of the past and an example for others.

48. See, for example verse 40 of Sūrah al-Mu'min. (*Translator*)

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things.

Readers may now proceed to study the subsequent verses.

Text and Translation

وَلَمَّا ضُرِبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلًا اِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَقَالُوْٓاءَاٰلِهَتُنَا خَيْرٌ اَمْ هُوَ ؕ مَا ضَرَبُوْهُ لَكَ اِلَّا جَدَلًا ؕ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا عَبْدٌ اَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَلَوْ نَشَآءُ لَجَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ مَّلٰٓئِكَةً فِي الْاَرْضِ يَخْلُفُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُوْنِ ؕ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَلَمَّا جَآءَ عِيْسٰى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالَ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِاُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِيْهِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿٦٣﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ؕ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَاخْتَلَفَ الْاَحْزَابُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِهِمْ ۚ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٦٥﴾

And when Mary's son is cited as an example, your people cry out and say: "Who is better; our gods or he?" They say this only to indulge in quibbling. In fact, they are indeed a contentious nation. He was but a servant of mine whom We favoured and made an example to the Israelites. And if it had been Our will, We could have made angels from among you who would be vicegerents on earth. (57-60)

And indeed he is a great sign of the Hour of Doom. So have no doubt about it and follow Me. This is this straight path and let not Satan stop you from it; indeed, he is your open foe. (61-62)

And when Jesus came with evident signs, he said: "I have come to you with al-ḥikmah to make plain to you some of the things you differ about. So fear God and follow me. Indeed, God alone is my Lord and your Lord: therefore serve Him only. This is the straight path. Yet their factions disagreed among themselves. Thus devastation of a woeful punishment be for those who have committed polytheism. (63-65)

Explanation

وَلَمَّا ضُرِبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلًا اِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَقَالُوْٓاءَاٰلِهَتُنَا خَيْرٌ اَمْ هُوَ ؕ مَا ضَرَبُوْهُ لَكَ اِلَّا جَدَلًا ؕ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾[49]

When the name of Jesus (sws) and his message is taken before the Prophet's nation that he too preached this religion of monotheism which was preached by all religions, the pugnacious elements work mischief from this mention. They cry out that look at this person; he decries their idols but praises Jesus (sws) even though their deities are

49. And when Mary's son is cited as an example, your people cry out and say: "Who is better; our gods or he?" They say this only to indulge in quibbling. In fact, they are indeed a contentious nation.

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angels and Jesus (sws) is only Mary's son. In this manner, they would try to give this impression to their people that if the Qur'ān mentions Jesus (sws), it mentions him in the capacity of a deity and that this is no less than a conspiracy to lessen the respect and honour they have for their ancestral deities and to implant in their minds in place of it the divinity of Jesus (sws).

The words مَا ضَرَبُوْهُ لَكَ اِلَّا جَدَلًا ۭ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُوْنَ state that they have played this prank only to create dispute and argumentation. They very well know that if the Qur'ān mentions Jesus (sws), he does not mention him in the capacity of a deity but as a servant of God and His messenger; like other prophets and messengers, he too called people to monotheism. In spite of knowing all this, they have merely created this mischief to get hold of an excuse to oppose the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) and to incite people that this person is trying to obliterate their ancestral religion and wants to impose Christianity upon them. The verse says that these are but a contentious people. It is not incidental that they have worked this ploy; the fact is that creating mischief and spreading evil has become their trait.

It may be kept in mind here that the quarrelsome leaders of the Quraysh had worked up a similar mischief regarding the word الرَّحْمٰن. I have already explained this in the exegesis of verse 110 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl. Readers may look it up. The Quraysh were not unaware that الرَّحْمٰن was God's name. However, since it was used a lot by the People of the Book, in particular the Christians, they started to incite their people that this person is trying to impose the views and beliefs of others upon them. To substantiate this claim of theirs, they would say that the scripture he is presenting abundantly mentions the word الرَّحْمٰن. By relying on such things, these idolaters would also say that there are some among the People of the Book who teach this person and the purpose of this conspiracy, they would contend, is to obliterate their religion and traditions.

Such pranks are very effective in situations of distrust and mis-conjecture. The minds of the masses are very raw. They accept such things very easily, and when they accept them, then it is not easy to scrape them out of their minds.

The expression صَدَّ مِنَ الشَّیء means to cry out after expressing disgust at something. This word is not conventionally used to make noise after being happy at something.

اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا عَبْدٌ اَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَاۗءِيْلَ ﴿۵۹﴾[50]

If the Qur'ān is presenting Jesus (sws) as an example, then it is not in the capacity of a deity but in the capacity of a servant of God who was specially blessed by Him and made an example before the Israelites as a person who led an exemplary life. The special blessing here refers to his traits which have been mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān at other instances: he was born from the directive of *kun* (be)without a father;

50. He was but a servant of mine whom We favoured and made an example to the Israelites.

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he was specially helped by the Holy spirit; his conversation was steeped in wisdom even when he spoke in his cradle; he was made a messenger by God; he taught wisdom to people; he worked amazing miracles and God did not allow any of the conspiracies hatched against him by the Jews to succeed; so much so, the Qur'ān refuted the feat on which the Jews were so proud of and declared that he was not crucified and the Jews never succeeded in this conspiracy of theirs against him.

The words مَثَلًا لِّبَنِيٓ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ refer to the fact that the Almighty made Jesus (sws) an example for the Israelites so that they could review and correct all their misdoings in life after seeing his life. No doubt, each messenger occupies the status of a divine court for the reformation of his people, and it is in following his noble example that the people are able to succeed in the Hereafter; however, the Almighty gave Jesus (sws) a special birth and equipped him with open miracles in order to stir and prod the Israelites who had forgotten the teachings of their prophets. But their hearts had hardened so much that they did not learn a lesson from this example. As a result of which the Almighty hurled His eternal curse on them.

وَلَوۡ نَشَآءُ لَجَعَلۡنَا مِنۡكُمۡ مَّلٰٓئِكَةً فِى الۡاَرۡضِ يَخۡلُفُوۡنَ ﴿۶۰﴾[51]

Earlier, in verse 58, the words ءَاٰلِهَتُنَا خَيۡرٌ اَمۡ هُوَ ("Who is better; our gods or he?") of the Idolaters have been cited. This verse is a comment on these words: if the Idolaters regard angels as worthy of worship merely because they have been created from a superior substance (light), then this is nothing of significance which can make someone worthy of worship. Such is the power and might of God that just as He can create angels from light, He can even create people who have angelic traits and they carry out the responsibility of *khilāfah* which is entrusted to human beings. However, this is against the wisdom of God. Hence, He did not do this. In other words, the mere creation of something from light or fire or without a father does not make him god or a partner of God. All these things are in the power of God; Hence, He Who is the creator of this universe is alone worthy of worship

وَاِنَّهٗ لَعِلۡمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمۡتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُوۡنِ ؕ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٌ ﴿۶۱﴾ وَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكُمُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمۡ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿۶۲﴾[52]

Here the quarrelsome people are warned through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that they should not exaggerate things: Jesus (sws) is not being presented as someone worthy of worship or as a son of God; the fact is that he is one who called people towards monotheism and is *'ilm* ie certain sign of the Hereafter; so they should have

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51. And if it had been Our will, We could have made angels from among you who would be vicegerents on earth.

52. And indeed he is a great sign of the Hour of Doom. So have no doubt about it and follow Me. This is this straight path and let not Satan stop you from it; indeed, he is your open foe.

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no doubts about the Hereafter and instead of getting entangled and entangling people in polemical debates, they should follow him (ie. Muḥammad (sws)); for this is the straight path of guidance and success.

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ عِيْسٰى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالَ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِاُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِيْهِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿٦٣﴾[53]

This is an allusion to the purpose of the advent of Jesus (sws) and to the message he preached: he came with very clear signs from God and called upon the Israelites that he has not brought a new religion to them; he has brought the same religion taught to them by Moses (sws); however, he has indeed come to them with the wisdom and spirit behind religious directives from which they had deprived themselves so that a believing life is enkindled in them; he has also indeed come to them to give them the true verdict in certain differences they had become entangled in. It is evident from contextual indication that the sentence conjugated to وَلِاُبَيِّنَ is suppressed. I have just explained it.

It should remain evident that Jesus (sws) did not bring a new *sharī'ah.* He only corroborated the Torah and wanted to make aware the Israelites of the spirit and essence of religion; however, the Israelites did not duly value this and remained enslaved to the exterior form of religion. The result of this attitude was that the real religion was lost to them and only some rituals remained observing which made them satisfied – thinking that they had fulfilled all the obligations of religion imposed on them.

If the wisdom and spirit of religion is lost and only rituals and words remain, an essential consequence of this also is that various types of differences arise in religion resolving which becomes impossible. The Jews too were caught up in this trial after being deprived of the spirit of religion. By teaching them the spirit of religion, Jesus (sws) wanted to resolve their religious differences but the Jews did not duly value his teaching. The result was that their differences kept on increasing until they reached their present state of theirs, which was an essential outcome of their ungrateful attitude.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۭ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾[54]

Precisely this sentence occurs in verse fifty one of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān with just one change of word. I have already fully explained this in the exegesis of that verse. This verse mentions the real message of Jesus (sws). Like other prophets and messengers he too called people to monotheism, and not to worship him or some one other. While explaining verse 51 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān, I have written that the words of the Gospel:

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53. And when Jesus came with evident signs, he said: "I have come to you with al-ḥikmah to make plain to you some of the things you differ about. So fear God and follow me.

54. Indeed, God alone is my Lord and your Lord: therefore serve Him only. This is the straight path.

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"My father and your father …"[55] refer to exactly what the Qur'ān has said here by the words: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ رَبِّیْ وَ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ؕ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِیْمٌ. In the connotation in which they would regard God to be their father, in the same connotation they would regard Him to be the father of others and only regarded Him to be worthy of worship. In the exegesis of verse 51 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān, I have also alluded to the fact that the word اَب in Hebrew is used both to refer to the father and to God, and the sense in which it is used is governed by the context and occasion.

The words هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِیْمٌ refer to the fact that this is the straight path which leads to God. If someone else is made God's partner, then this straight path will becomes contorted or blocked.

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْاَحْزَابُ مِنْۢ بَیْنِهِمْ ۚ فَوَیْلٌ لِّلَّذِیْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْ عَذَابِ یَوْمٍ اَلِیْمٍ ﴿۶۵﴾[56]

The verse implies that Jesus (sws) very clearly and categorically called his people towards monotheism. However, various groups from among his followers adopted different views. I have already explained the nature of these differences at an appropriate place of this exegesis. After Jesus (sws), except for the followers of Simon Peter all other sects adopted the beliefs of trinity and atonement, thereby totally obliterating the teaching of monotheism put forth by him. The present Christianity is nothing but a collection of St Paul's religious innovations, and in the interpretation of his interpretations many sects came into being.

In the sentence: فَوَیْلٌ لِّلَّذِیْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْ عَذَابِ یَوْمٍ اَلِیْمٍ, the words لِّلَّذِیْنَ ظَلَمُوْا refer to those people who were unjust to their souls by being inflicted with polytheism. The sentence says that for such people is the destruction of punishment of a painful day.

Section V: Verses (66-89)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah* in which first the believers are informed of their good fate and the disbelievers are informed of their evil fate. After this, while assuring the Prophet (sws), he is directed to ignore those who make fun of God's guidance and remain indifferent to their fate. In the end, people are reminded of *tawḥīd* again so that those who have no fear of the Hereafter because of their baseless concept of intercession should keep in mind that on that Day each one will face the one and only God, and no recommendation of a person shall avail anyone else.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

55. See, for example: John, 20:17.

56. Yet their factions disagreed among themselves. Thus devastation of a woeful punishment be for those who have committed polytheism.

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Text and Translation

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا السَّاعَةَ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ اَلْاَخِلَّآءُ يَوْمَئِذٍۢ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ اِلَّا الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾
يٰعِبَادِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَآ اَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوْا مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ اَنْتُمْ وَ
اَزْوَاجُكُمْ تُحْبَرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِصِحَافٍ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّاَكْوَابٍ ۚ وَفِيْهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيْهِ الْاَنْفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْاَعْيُنُ ۚ وَاَنْتُمْ
فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَتِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِيْٓ اُوْرِثْتُمُوْهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا فَاكِهَةٌ كَثِيْرَةٌ مِّنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ اِنَّ
الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ فِيْ عَذَابِ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ لَا يُفَتَّرُ عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيْهِ مُبْلِسُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَمَا ظَلَمْنٰهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْا هُمُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾
وَنَادَوْا يٰمٰلِكُ لِيَقْضِ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ ۭ قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ مّٰكِثُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ لَقَدْ جِئْنٰكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ اَمْ اَبْرَمُوْٓا
اَمْرًا فَاِنَّا مُبْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ اَمْ يَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّا لَا نَسْمَعُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوٰىهُمْ ۭ بَلٰى وَرُسُلُنَا لَدَيْهِمْ يَكْتُبُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ قُلْ اِنْ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ
وَلَدٌ ۖ فَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْعٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوْضُوْا وَيَلْعَبُوْا حَتّٰى
يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِيْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ فِي السَّمَآءِ اِلٰهٌ وَّفِي الْاَرْضِ اِلٰهٌ ۭ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَتَبٰرَكَ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ
مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ وَعِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ۚ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَلَا يَمْلِكُ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ
الشَّفَاعَةَ اِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَلَىِٕنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ فَاَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَقِيْلِهٖ يٰرَبِّ
اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ قَوْمٌ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ ۭ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾

These people are only waiting for the hour of doom to come upon them suddenly and catch them unaware. All friends on the day shall become enemies to one another except the God-fearing. (66-67)

O My servants! You have nothing to fear nor will you be sorrowful, who have believed in Our revelations and remained obedient. Enter Paradise, you and those who shared your beliefs; you shall be blessed with delight. They shall be served with golden dishes and golden cups and in them will be that which they are desirous of and with which their eyes rejoice in. And you will remain herein forever and this is the Paradise which you have inherited by virtue of your deeds. And in it shall be many fruits from which you shall eat. (68-73)

Indeed, the sinners shall endure forever the torment of Hell. It will not be lessened for them, and they shall remain in it in despair. And We were not unjust to them, but they themselves were unjust to their souls. And they will cry out: "O Master! Would that your Lord end our existence." He will reply: "You will remain in this situation." (74-77)

And We came to you with the truth but your majority detested the truth. Have they taken a firm decision so that We also make a firm decision. Do they think that We cannot hear their secrets and their whispers? Yes! We are hearing and Our angels who are by their side, record it. (78-80)

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Say: "If the Merciful God had a son, I will be the first to worship him." Exalted be the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, above what they say. Leave them to indulge in pleasantries and in jest until they face the day they are being threatened with. (81-83)

And He alone is God in the heavens and He only is God on earth and only He is the real Wise and All-knowing One, and extremely blessed is He Who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them! And He alone has knowledge of the Hour of Doom, and to Him shall you be recalled. And those whom they invoke besides Him do not have the power to intercede for them except for those who will bear witness to the truth and they will fully know as well. Yet if you ask them who created them, they will surely say: "God." Where then do they wander about? And the words of those who will bear witness to the truth will be: "Lord, these people never professed faith." So ignore them and say: "Peace be to you." Thus, they shall soon come to know. (84-89)

Explanation

هَلۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ اِلَّا السَّاعَةَ اَنۡ تَاۡتِيَهُمۡ بَغۡتَةً وَّهُمۡ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۶۶﴾[57]

After citing the above quoted arguments, this verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws): if they are not listening to him, then it is because they do not value his advice and reminders. Their attitude shows that instead of paying heed and doing some deeds for the Hereafter, they want that the hour of doom should come upon them suddenly and catch them unaware. If this is what they want, then the Prophet (sws) should leave them to themselves. God wanted them to earn something for the dreadful day before it comes. However, since they want to meet it suddenly, there is no use being anxious for them. They themselves will see the fate of this heedlessness.

اَلۡاَخِلَّآءُ يَوۡمَئِذٍۢ بَعۡضُهُمۡ لِبَعۡضٍ عَدُوٌّ اِلَّا الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ ﴿۶۷﴾[58]

These people trust their friends, helpers, tribe, nation and deities and intercessors and this trust has made them totally heedless and fearless of the Hereafter; however, on the day which is to come in the future the closest of friends and the closest of relatives will be of no benefit to a person; in fact, all these friends will become mutual enemies in the Hereafter because it was this mutual friendship which became the cause of their eternal doom. If they had not been "yes-men" who support each others' views and instead had reflected with freedom and seriousness on the good and evil they were faced with, they would never have been deprived of the blessings of the sincere counsel and advice of the Prophet (sws) and his companions. On that day,

57. These people are only waiting for the hour of doom to come upon them suddenly and catch them unaware.

58. All friends on the day shall become enemies to one another except the God-fearing.

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every person will be dejected at his deprivation and will censure his friends. However, all these wailings be of no avail. Verses 36 to 39 discuss this very issue in a very effective way.

The words اِلَّا الْمُتَّقِيْنَ refer to the fact that the believers and the pious will remain protected from this evil fate. They used to advise and counsel one another about what was the truth and what was just and also practiced on their own counsel. For this reason, they will rejoice on the Day of Judgement on their success and welcome their companions with peace and salutations.

يٰعِبَادِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَآ اَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ كَانُوْا مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ اَنْتُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُكُمْ تُحْبَرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ [59]

These are words of congratulations from God to these pious people: after being rid of the place of trial in which they were afflicted with both fear and sorrow, they have entered this eternal kingdom where fear and sorrow will not bother them at all. I have already explained at a place that fear relates to the dangers of the future and sorrow to the failures and afflictions of the present and the past. Paradise is a place where believers will be shielded from both these elements; thus these words لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَآ اَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُوْنَ (there shall be no fear on you on this day nor any sorrow) are a very apt way to depict the life of Paradise.

The words اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ كَانُوْا مُسْلِمِيْنَ portray the attributes of the pious people on the basis of which they became worthy of such a great reward. By the mention of these attributes the discourse becomes in direct conformity with the situation. It is as if the Almighty has pinpointed that this high status will be deserved by only those who today profess faith in His signs and follow His directives with full sincerity. It is an obvious outcome of this that those who claim to have professed faith but do not sincerely follow His directives are not worthy of these glad tidings.

Consider next the verse: اُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ اَنْتُمْ وَ اَزْوَاجُكُمْ تُحْبَرُوْنَ. The word حبر means to make someone happy and joyous.

The word اَزْوَاجُ is used in the Qur'ān to connote wives and also has some other meanings. For example, it also means something which is multifarious and has a lot of variety. In Sūrah Ṭāhā, it is said: وَ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖٓ اَزْوَاجًا مِّنْ نَّبَاتٍ شَتّٰى. (٢٠:٥٣) (and We sent down water from the skies; thus we caused to grow from it vegetation of various types, (20:53)).

Similarly, it is also used in the Qur'ān to refer to groups who hold the same view and are companions to one another. For example:

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59. O My servants! You have nothing to fear nor will you be sorrowful, who have believed in Our revelations and remained obedient. Enter Paradise, you and those who shared your beliefs; you shall be blessed with delight.

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لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ اِلٰى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهٖۤ اَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ. (١٥: ٨٨)

And do not look at things which We have granted some of their groups. (15:88)

اُحْشُرُوا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا وَاَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْبُدُوْنَ. (٣٧:٢٢)

Gather those who indulged in polytheism and also their companions and those things which they have been worshipping. (37:22)

وَكُنْتُمْ اَزْوَاجًا ثَلٰثَةً. (٥٦:٧)

On that day, you will be divided into three groups. (56:7)

In the light of these parallel verses, I am of the opinion that in the verse under discussion, the word اَزْوَاجُ refers to groups of people holding the same views and beliefs. I have thus translated this verse keeping in view this meaning. Though the level and rank of a person will be different with respect to the extent of his faith and nature of deeds, yet all believers will be treated with the favours of Paradise and will fully benefit from them. Earlier, the disbelievers and their associates and friends are mentioned and it is said that they will become enemies of one another. Here, in contrast, the situation which the believers will face is mentioned: they will be happy and rejoice in one another's company.

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِصِحَافٍ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّاَكْوَابٍ ۚ وَفِيْهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيْهِ الْاَنْفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْاَعْيُنُ ۚ وَاَنْتُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾[60]

The word صِحَاف refers to "plates and dishes," and the اَكْوَاب means "cups." Just as the word ذَهَب (gold) occurs with صِحَاف it also occurs with اَكْوَاب; however, in order to avoid repetition, it is suppressed. I have revealed this suppression in the translation. The verse says that the boy-stewards of Paradise would continuously circulate among the companions of Paradise plates and cups of gold for their hospitality.

The words وَفِيْهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيْهِ الْاَنْفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْاَعْيُنُ refer to the fact that in these plates and cups will be things which will be very desirable and also a treat to watch. There are some things which gave a good taste but they are not attractive in appearance. The Almighty will treat the believers in Paradise with such things which will not only be tasty but also eye-catching.

The words وَاَنْتُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ directly address the believers whereas the previous part of the verse addressed them indirectly. This change in style signifies special attention and favour. In other words, the Almighty will elaborately give glad tidings to them to rest assured that what they have been given is not transient in nature; they will remain

60. They shall be served with golden dishes and golden cups and in them will be that which they are desirous of and with which their eyes rejoice in.

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in Paradise forever. One's delight about the greatest of favours stands compromised if it is known that the favour is temporary. For this reason, the Almighty will assure the companions of Paradise to benefit from Paradise without any inhibition or reservation. No one can deprive them of it.

وَتِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِيٓ أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾[61]

An even greater glad tiding than the one mentioned earlier is that this Paradise has been given to them as a recompense of their deeds; in other words, it is not merely a gift; it is their right. If a person is rewarded with something which he has not earned, then the heart is not truly happy. The Almighty has also given due consideration to this aspect of human nature and instead of regarding Paradise to be a mere gift from Him, He has regarded it to be the consequence of the efforts of the inhabitants of Paradise – the efforts which they expended in this world for the cause of truth.

لَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ مِّنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾[62]

In verse 71 above, the edibles and drinks of the companions of Paradise were referred to. Mentioned in this verse are their fruits: to savor their taste-buds, there will be fruits of all kinds. Whichever they would want to eat will be at hand; there will be no fear of any reduction in this treasure.

إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي عَذَابِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾[63]

After a mention of the fate of the pious, the fate of the sinners is mentioned: they shall always dwell in the torment of Hell; they will never be able to free themselves of it.

لَا يُفَتَّرُ عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾[64]

Such will be the all-embracing nature of this torment that it will not be taken away from them even temporarily nor will it be reduced in extent, let alone being salvaged from it. The words وَهُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ imply that they will find themselves with no hope in this torment. Even in the worst of situations, the far-fetched hope does provide some assurance to a person that perhaps there will come a time when he will be rid of this torment or that this torment may reduce in severity. However, for these unfortunate

61. And you will remain herein forever and this is the Paradise which you have inherited by virtue of your deeds.

62. And in it shall be many fruits from which you shall eat.

63. Indeed, the sinners shall endure forever the torment of Hell.

64. It will not be lessened for them, and they shall remain in it in despair.

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people even this weak hope will not be there.

وَمَا ظَلَمْنٰهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْا هُمُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾[65]

The verse implies that this situation which they will face would not be the result of any injustice of God to them: they themselves can only be blamed for it. Thus it is as if they themselves have been unjust and oppressive to their souls. Whatever arrangement was needed for their guidance was made by the Almighty; however, they did not value it; instead they spent all their lives as slaves to their desires – as a result of which they encountered this fate.

وَنَادَوْا يٰمٰلِكُ لِيَقْضِ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ مّٰكِثُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾[66]

The state of eternal despair and hopelessness referred to in verse 75 earlier is explained by this verse. They will ask the jailer of Hell: O Master! If there is no possibility of any mercy on us please request your Lord to finish us. At this, the jailer will immediately reply that they shall not be destroyed; they will have to remain in this condition. The last support to despair is death, but these people will be deprived of even this support, and this indeed is their greatest deprivation.

لَقَدْ جِئْنٰكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كٰرِهُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾[67]

After portraying the fate of the sinners, the discourse from this verse once again warns the Quraysh; the Almighty has presented the Qur'ān before them in the form of the truth; however, their majority is showing aversion to it; if they adhere to this attitude, then they must contemplate the fate it will lead them to. If they now meet this dreadful fate, then this is not an injustice to them from the Almighty; it will be an injustice which they have done to themselves.

اَمْ اَبْرَمُوْٓا اَمْرًا فَاِنَّا مُبْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾[68]

The word ابرام means "to make something strong and secure." The expression ابرم الحبل would mean "to strongly twine the rope" Here it means to take a final decision on something.

This verse threatens the Quraysh with a decisive punishment, and in order to stress the threat the style has changed from direct address to indirect one as if they are not

65. And We were not unjust to them, but they themselves were unjust to their souls.

66. And they will cry out: "O Master! Would that your Lord end our existence. He will reply: "You will remain in this situation."

67. And We came to you with the truth but your majority detested the truth.

68. Have they taken a firm decision so that We also make a firm decision.

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worthy of being spoken to directly. The verse states that if they have made a final decision, then the Almighty too will make a final decision. In other words, if they have decided to deny the Qur'ān and the messenger, then they should remember that as per His established practice, God will decide to destroy them.

I have explained this established practice of the Almighty regarding His messengers at many places in this exegesis that when a nation decides to exile or kill the messenger sent to it, God does not give it any further respite; He in fact takes the messenger and his companions in His refuge and destroys the rest of the nation. The verse refers to this very established practice of God: if the Quraysh have fully decided to deny their messenger, they shall necessarily fall in the sphere of application of this established practice, and nothing will be able to save them. It is evident from this that as long as a nation is hesitant about accepting the call of its messenger, the Almighty keeps giving it respite; however, when it resolves to destroy the preacher and his call, then the final judgement of God visits it.

اَمۡ يَحۡسَبُوۡنَ اَنَّا لَا نَسۡمَعُ سِرَّهُمۡ وَنَجۡوٰىهُمۡ ؕ بَلٰى وَرُسُلُنَا لَدَيۡهِمۡ يَكۡتُبُوۡنَ ﴿۸۰﴾[69]

Though the Almighty is aware of every secret and every whispering of people, it is evident from the context that the reference in this verse is to secret whisperings which the Quraysh were doing in *dār al-nadwah* viz a viz killing or turning out the Prophet (sws) from Makkah. The implication is that these people should not be under the misconception that God is unaware of their conspiracies and secret conversation. He is fully aware of all their clandestine activities, and His angels are keeping a written record of each and every deed of theirs. When these people make a final decision about the Messenger of God, God's decision about them too will manifest itself. Then all their plans will end in failure.

قُلۡ اِنۡ كَانَ لِلرَّحۡمٰنِ وَلَدٌ ۖ فَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الۡعٰبِدِيۡنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ سُبۡحٰنَ رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ رَبِّ الۡعَرۡشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوۡنَ ﴿۸۲﴾[70]

Here at the end, while referring to the discussion found in the opening verses of the *sūrah* viz a viz the refutation of divinity of the angels, a decisive declaration is made: the Prophet (sws) should tell these people that if it is proven that God does have children then, he – the Prophet (sws) – would be the first to worship them; however, the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of the throne is beyond such things that they are ascribing to Him without any basis. He alone is the creator of all these things and He alone is the master of this universe and solely rules it; neither is He in need of a son nor daughter. He also does not require a helper or a partner.

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69. Do they think that We cannot hear their secrets and their whispers? Yes! We are hearing and Our angels who are by their side, record it.

70. Say: "If the Merciful God had a son, I will be the first to worship him." Exalted be the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, above what they say.

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فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوْضُوْا وَيَلْعَبُوْا حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِيْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾[71]

The verse says that after giving this decisive channel, the Prophet (sws) should leave them to themselves; he should let them make whatever excuses they want to and let them indulge their frivolous talk until they encounter the Day they are being threatened with. On that Day, the reality will be revealed to them that those whom they worshipped regarding them to be god will be of no avail to them.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ فِي السَّمَآءِ اِلٰهٌ وَّفِي الْاَرْضِ اِلٰهٌ ؕ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٨٤﴾[72]

The verse states that God alone is the Lord of the heavens and He alone is the Lord of the earth and it is His will and intention which prevails in the heavens and the earth. The harmony found between the heavens and the earth shows that they are working under the will of a single powerful and sustaining being. If multiple wills had been present in them, they would have been destroyed.

The words وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْعَلِيْمُ refer to the fact that God is wise and knowing; neither is any of His works devoid of wisdom nor is He dependent on anyone for His knowledge. Thus the false belief of intercession on the basis of which the Idolaters have become fearless of the Hereafter has no foundation. This belief is against the wisdom of God as well as His knowledge.

وَتَبٰرَكَ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ وَعِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ۚ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾[73]

The word تَبٰرَكَ encompasses in it the aspect of God's greatness as well as He being an embodiment of good and graciousness. The essential consequence of He being great and gracious is that only He should be feared and all hopes should be pinned only in Him. He is the king of whatever is between the heavens and the earth; so no one can dare have his own before Him or interfere in His will. Simultaneously, He has great mercy and graciousness; hence, He will deal with each in accordance with what His mercy will necessitate. People are not dependent on others to acquire His mercy.

The words وَعِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ imply that the knowledge of the hour of Judgement is only with God; if prophets of God are not able to tell its time of arrival, then it does not mean that it will not come. It is certain to come, and people must

71. Leave them to indulge in pleasantries and in jest until they face the day they are being threatened with.

72. And He alone is God in the heavens and He only is God on earth and only He is the real Wise and All-knowing One,

73. And extremely blessed is He Who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them! And He alone has knowledge of the Hour of Doom, and to Him shall you be recalled.

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clearly understand that they will have to return to Him; on that Day, no one except Him will everyone return to and so they should not expect help from any other being.

وَلَا يَمْلِكُ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ الشَّفَاعَةَ اِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾[74]

This verse explains the words وَ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ of the previous verse. The idolaters are overcome with the false notion that in the Hereafter they will return to their alleged deities and intercessors who will be their protectors also; they will secure release for them from the grasp of God through their intercession. The verse says that those who they invoke other than God have no authority to intercede. On that Day, the decision will fully rest in the hands of God, and He will judge people with full justice. In Sūrah al-Mu'min the words are: وَاللّٰهُ يَقْضِيْ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ لَا يَقْضُوْنَ بِشَيْءٍ. (٢٠:٤٠) (and God will decide with absolute justice and those who they invoke other than God will not judge any thing, (40:20)).

The exception in اِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ is severed (*munqaṭa'*). What is implied is that on that Day no one will have the authority to intercede; however, those whom the Almighty permits will bear witness to the truth and they will bear witness to that which they know. It is specified in the Qur'ān at many places that in the presence of God only those will be able to intercede who will be given permission from God and will only converse that much for which they are permitted. In Sūrah Ṭāhā, the words are: يَوْمَىِٕذٍ لَّا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ اِلَّا مَنْ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهٗ قَوْلًا (١٠٩:٢٠) (on that day, intercession will be of no avail to anyone except for whom God grants permission and desires that anything should be said about him, (20:109). Similarly, this is also explicitly stated that in the first place only that person will speak who will be permitted by God; then too he will utter only that which is the absolute truth. Thus, in Sūrah al-Nabā', it is stated: يَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الرُّوْحُ وَالْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةُ صَفًّا ۭ لَّا يَتَكَلَّمُوْنَ اِلَّا مَنْ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا. (٣٨:٧٨) (on the Day when Gabriel and the angels will stand arrayed; they will not speak unless whom the most Gracious allows and he shall speak the truth., (78:38)). Moreover, it is also explicitly stated that the near ones of God will utter whatever is in their knowledge; they will dare not utter anything that is not in their knowledge. In Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the following words of Jesus (sws) are cited: وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيْهِمْ. (١١٧:٥) (I was a witness to them as long as I remained among them, (5:117)). In other words, what they did after Jesus (sws) passed away never came in his knowledge; only God is a witness to it. It is evident from this verse that the evidence presented by the prophets of God will relate to the period in which they were present; they will not say anything about what happened in later periods because they will have no knowledge of it.

74. And those whom they invoke besides Him do not have the power to intercede for them except for those who will bear witness to the truth and they will fully know as well.

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وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ فَاَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾[75]

This verse expresses wonder at the idolaters; they regard beings other than God to have the authority to intercede. The verse says that if they are asked about their creator; their answer in all cases will be God. It is really strange how they lose their senses after this answer by believing that their alleged deities are so close to God that they can release any person they like from God's grasp and through their intercession can secure a high status for any person they want.

وَقِيْلِهٖ يٰرَبِّ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ قَوْمٌ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾[76]

The word قِيْلِهٖ is co-ordinated to the word بِالْحَقِّ of the verse before the previous one. In other words, they will only say the truth and their testimony will be: Lord they themselves are to be blamed for not embracing faith; they were not prepared to take this step. The succeeding verse had merely come as a parenthetical one to express a modification (*istidrāk*). Thus the conjugate and conjugated sentences were not distanced from one another. Such examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* of this exegesis and will be found in the coming ones as well.

Here it may be kept in mind that on the Day of Judgement, the idolaters will present their alleged deities as an excuse of being led away from the truth; however, these deities will outright reject this claim. For example, it is specified in the Qur'ān that God will ask the angels whether the claim of the idolaters of worshipping them is true. The angels will declare their explicit renunciation and say that they themselves are responsible for straying away from the truth and that they have no link with it. The Qur'ān states:

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ يَقُوْلُ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ اِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوْا يَعْبُدُوْنَ. قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ اَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِنْ دُوْنِهِمْ ۚ بَلْ كَانُوْا يَعْبُدُوْنَ الْجِنَّ ۚ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِهِمْ مُّؤْمِنُوْنَ. (٣٤: ٤٠-٤١)

And recall the day when He will gather everyone and then ask the angels: "Have these people been worshipping you?" They will reply: "Glory to you; You are our protector against them; in fact, they have been worshipping the jinn and a majority of them profess faith in them." (34:40-41)

The testimony of Jesus (sws) is mentioned in the following words:

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75. Yet if you ask them who created them, they will surely say: "God." Where then do they wander about?

76. And the words of those who will bear witness to the truth will be: "Lord, these people never professed faith."

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وَاِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَاَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُوْنِيْ وَاُمِّيَ اِلٰهَيْنِ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُوْنُ لِيْٓ اَنْ اَقُوْلَ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ ۗ بِحَقٍّ ؕ اِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهٗ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهٗ. (١١٦:٥)

God will ask: "Jesus son of Mary, did you tell people: 'Regard me and my mother as gods except God?'" He will reply: "Glory be to you! How was it befitting for me to say something which I had no authority. If I had said this, it would have been in Your knowledge." (5:116)

This reality is mentioned in Sūrah al-Aḥqāf in the following words:

وَمَنْ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ يَّدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَنْ لَّا يَسْتَجِيْبُ لَهٗٓ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَهُمْ عَنْ دُعَآىِٕهِمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ. وَاِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوْا لَهُمْ اَعْدَآءً وَّكَانُوْا بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ. (٤٦: ٥-٦)

And who is in greater error than those who invoke things other than God which will never be able to respond to them till the Day of Judgement and they are also unaware of their worship! And when people are called together, they will declare themselves their enemies and will disown their worship. (46:5-6)

فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ ؕ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾[77]

These words direct the Prophet (sws) that if these people are keen to see their fate, then leave them alone and ignore them the way Abraham (sws) had done with his father. The word سَلٰمٌ connotes "good-bye."

The words فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ imply that the fate which they await is not far off; they shall soon witness it.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of the exegesis of this *sūrah*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (thus gratitude be to God on this).

Raḥmānābād
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77. So ignore them and say: "Peace be to you." Thus, they shall soon come to know.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Dukhān (44)

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Sūrah al-Dukhān

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

The Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah* is the same as that of the previous one, and its introductory passage is also the same viz a viz the implied meaning as that of the introductory passage of the previous *sūrah*. However, the difference between the two *sūrahs* is that in the previous one arguments in favour of monotheism are prominent, while in this one, the element of warning is prominent. If the whole *sūrah* is reflected upon, it will become evident that in it the Qur'ān and the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) are validated through the premise that the fate of which the Qur'ān is informing its rejecters is something which is certain to take place both in this world and the Hereafter. History bears witness to it and it is also a requisite of sense and human nature. In other words, it can also be stated that the warning sounded in the last verse of the previous *sūrah*: فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَ قُلْ سَلٰمٌ ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ (٤٣:٨٩) (ignore them and say: "peace be to you"; so soon they shall come to know, (43:89)) is substantiated and corroborated in this *sūrah.* In the subsequent *sūrahs* of the group, this subject will become even more prominent. So much so, the Madīnan *sūrahs* at the end of the group declare that the Quraysh will be stripped of their position and the believers will be divinely helped and will reign supreme in the land.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-16): A reference to the exalted and majestic nature of the Qur'ān: it was revealed in the blessed Night of Destiny (لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ) in which affairs are decided at the behest of God. The Qur'ān has been revealed as a requisite of the mercy and providence of the God Who hears and knows all, and apart from Whom there is no god. The purpose of its revelation is to warn people who are leading their lives in indifference and apathy to wake up from their slumber and prepare for the day which is to come. There were people in those times who said that they would only regard Muḥammad (sws) to be a true prophet if they were shown the promised punishment. Such people are warned that the faith which is professed after observing this punishment is of no benefit. If the punishment is being deferred, it does not mean that its promise is merely a threat. If God grants respite to people in this world, it does not mean that they will be saved from His torment. They shall necessarily be punished in the Hereafter and a grave punishment it shall be.

Verses (17-33): The example of the Pharaoh and his people is cited to the Quraysh so

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that they can learn a lesson. Moses (sws) warned them of the Hereafter but they remained afflicted with the arrogance produced in them by their wealth and status. Once the truth had been conclusively conveyed to them, the Almighty destroyed them. Their country as well as their wealth and assets were occupied by others and the Israelites who were suffering in their yoke of slavery were emancipated and became a great nation of the world.

Verses (34-67): The real reason behind the arrogance and haughtiness of the Quraysh is alluded to: they do not believe in any concept of afterlife. For this reason, its warnings seem a piece of jest to them. In order to admonish them, logical as well as historical arguments in favour of reward and punishment are briefly referred to. It is mentioned in detail that God will not deal equally between those who spent their lives in indifference to the Hereafter and those who did so while having full faith in it. The Almighty will deal with them differently, and this dealing will be totally based on justice. The disbelievers will suffer the punishment for their ingratitude, and the believers will be duly rewarded for their virtues – and this is real success and not the one by which these naïve people are lured away.

Verses (58-59): This is the closing section of the *sūrah*. A reference is made to the great favour done by the Almighty to the Quraysh by revealing the Qur'ān to them in lucid Arabic. It may be noted that the *sūrah* began with a note on the exaltedness of the Qur'ān and it ends on the same note. In it, the Quraysh are warned that the Almighty has equipped the Qur'ān with all essential requisites to conclusively convey the truth. If they do not duly honour it, they should get ready to face the consequences that are destined for those who reject the messengers of God. In the last verse, the Prophet (sws) is also assured that if instead of benefiting from this favour, these people want to wait for the punishment, then he too should wait for the advent of this evil day for them.

Section I: Verses (1-16)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ﴿۱﴾ وَ الۡکِتٰبِ الۡمُبِیۡنِ ﴿۲﴾ اِنَّاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنٰہُ فِیۡ لَیۡلَۃٍ مُّبٰرَکَۃٍ اِنَّا کُنَّا مُنۡذِرِیۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ فِیۡہَا یُفۡرَقُ کُلُّ اَمۡرٍ حَکِیۡمٍ ﴿۴﴾ اَمۡرًا
مِّنۡ عِنۡدِنَا ؕ اِنَّا کُنَّا مُرۡسِلِیۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ رَحۡمَۃً مِّنۡ رَّبِّکَ ؕ اِنَّہٗ ہُوَ السَّمِیۡعُ الۡعَلِیۡمُ ﴿۶﴾ رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا بَیۡنَہُمَا ۟ اِنۡ
کُنۡتُمۡ مُّوۡقِنِیۡنَ ﴿۷﴾ لَاۤ اِلٰہَ اِلَّا ہُوَ یُحۡیٖ وَ یُمِیۡتُ ؕ رَبُّکُمۡ وَ رَبُّ اٰبَآئِکُمُ الۡاَوَّلِیۡنَ ﴿۸﴾ بَلۡ ہُمۡ فِیۡ شَکٍّ یَّلۡعَبُوۡنَ ﴿۹﴾ فَارۡتَقِبۡ یَوۡمَ
تَاۡتِی السَّمَآءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِیۡنٍ ﴿۱۰﴾ یَّغۡشَی النَّاسَ ؕ ہٰذَا عَذَابٌ اَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾ رَبَّنَا اکۡشِفۡ عَنَّا الۡعَذَابَ اِنَّا مُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ اَنّٰی
لَہُمُ الذِّکۡرٰی وَ قَدۡ جَآءَہُمۡ رَسُوۡلٌ مُّبِیۡنٌ ﴿۱۳﴾ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوۡا عَنۡہُ وَ قَالُوۡا مُعَلَّمٌ مَّجۡنُوۡنٌ ﴿۱۴﴾ اِنَّا کَاشِفُوا الۡعَذَابِ قَلِیۡلًا اِنَّکُمۡ

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عَآبِدُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرٰى ۚ اِنَّا مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Ḥā Mīm. By the lucid Book! Indeed, We revealed it in a blessed night. Indeed, We were to inform people. On this night, all wise matters are distributed as a special directive from Ourself. Indeed, We were to send a Messenger as a special blessing from your Lord. Indeed, He it is Who sees and hears. With His mercy Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you show conviction. There is no god but Him. He only gives life and death. He is your Lord and also the Lord of your forefathers. (1-8)

Yet they are in doubt, playing about. So, wait for the day when the sky will appear with a clear smoke. That smoke will envelop people. This is a grave torment. Lord! Distance this torment from us; we are now believers. But what opportunity remains for them now to pay heed! An enlightening Messenger had come to them. So, they turned away from him and said: "A madman, taught by others!" If We defer the torment for some time, you will do what you had been doing. Remember the day when We will grasp intensely; on that Day, We will take full revenge. (9-16)

Explanation

حٰمٓ[1]

This is the Qur'ānic name of the *sūrah*. The previous *sūrah* also has the same name. Commonality in name bears evidence to commonality in topic. Thus, a little deliberation shows that this *sūrah* explains in detail the threat sounded to the Quraysh in the last verse of the previous *sūrah* viz a viz the fate the Quraysh would meet as a result of denying the Messenger of God.

The succeeding verses will elucidate this.

وَالْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ[2]

The particle وَ signifies an oath and it has been explained in the course of this exegesis that in Arabic, oaths are meant to substantiate a claim. For this reason, the question arises about the claim that is meant to be substantiated here. In general, our exegetes have regarded the very next verse to be the statement of this claim. Though there is nothing wrong with this view as far as linguistic principles are concerned, I am not fully convinced of this view. An oath and its complement (the statement which substantiates the claim) are related to one another the way a premise and corroborating evidence are. Here, I am unable to understand how the Qur'ān, being a lucid Book, bears evidence to the fact that God revealed it in a blessed night. In my opinion, the

1. This is Ḥā Mīm.
2. By the lucid Book!

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complement of oath is suppressed here. Contextual evidence and occasion of the discourse point to this suppression. There are several examples in the Qur'ān where a complement of oath is not mentioned because of concomitant indications. A clear example of this exists in Sūrah Qāf: (٥٠: ١-٢) قٓ ۚ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ الْمَجِيْدِ. بَلْ عَجِبُوْٓا اَنْ جَآءَهُمْ مُّنْذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ. (This is Sūrah Qāf. By the glorious Qur'ān! In fact, they were confounded by the fact that a warner from amongst themselves had come to them. (50:1-2)). Obviously, the complement of oath is suppressed here. In a similar manner, it is also suppressed in the verse under discussion. The benefit of this suppression is that whatever is implied can be supposed to be understood as per contextual indications. If this suppression is revealed, the overall discourse would be something to the effect: it is a lucid Book which in itself is a conclusive proof on its claim; it bears evidence to the fact that the fate with which it is threatening its rejecters is certain to come; the person who is presenting this Book should not be regarded by them to be a lunatic or a madman; he is an indisputable Messenger of God; all his preaching is based on wisdom; those who accept it will earn the mercy of God and those who reject it will earn his wrath; people do not need to look beyond the Qur'ān to find arguments in support of all these premises; the Qur'ān alone is sufficient to highlight each of them; those who deny it are calling for their own doom.

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ فِيْ لَيْلَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ اِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِيْنَ ۝٣[3]

This is a mention of the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty to reveal this Book. The purpose is to make evident upon the addressees that this Book is not a matter of jest nor is it a pretentious product of a lunatic; on the contrary, it is a grand part of a great scheme of God and to reveal it the Almighty chose that blessed night in which all affairs of wisdom are specially entrusted by Him. The purpose of revealing it is to warn people whose forefathers had not been warned so that the truth is conclusively revealed to them from God and they are not able to present the excuse on the Day of Judgement that they had been seized without any warning. There are certain other aspects also which relate to this elaborate arrangement undertaken by the Almighty while revealing the Qur'ān. I will allude to them in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Jinn and Sūrah al-Qadr respectively.

The words لَيْلَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ obviously allude to لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (the Night of Destiny). Thus it is specified in Sūrah al-Qadr that it was on this night that the Qur'ān was revealed:

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ فِيْ لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ. وَمَآ اَدْرٰىكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ. لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ۙ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ اَلْفِ شَهْرٍ. تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَالرُّوْحُ فِيْهَا بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ مِنْ كُلِّ اَمْرٍ. سَلٰمٌ ۛ هِيَ حَتّٰى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ. (٩٧: ١-٥)

Indeed, We sent it down in the Night of Destiny. And what do you imagine what

3. Indeed, We revealed it in a blessed night. Indeed, We were to inform people.

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the Night of Destiny is? Better is the Night of Destiny than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend therein [with decrees] about all matters, by the permission of their Lord. The night is peace in its entirety. It remains until the rise of dawn. (97:1-5)

The لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (the Night of Destiny) has to be some night of the month of Ramaḍān because the Qur'ān has specified that it was in this month that the Qur'ān was revealed: شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِیْٓ اُنْزِلَ فِیْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ (۱۸۵:۲) (it is the month of Ramaḍān in which the Qur'ān was revealed, (2:185)).

As far as the question of the exact day is concerned, it is difficult to answer it. At best it can be said in the light of various narratives that it is of the last ten nights of Ramaḍān. Apparently the divine wisdom behind not specifying it is that people should continue to seek it, and in this manner their fondness and desire to find it is tested. It is in this fondness and desire on the part of the people that all the blessings of this night are concealed.

It is evident from all these details that there is no room for the view that this night refers to a night of the month of Sha'bān or of any other month.

The statement that the Qur'ān was revealed on this night does not necessitate that the whole Qur'ān was revealed in it; it refers to the fact that its revelation began in it. When a task was initiated in a blessed period of time and the decision for its complete revelation was also taken, it is as if the task was accomplished in that blessed period of time. This is because no one can change the decisions of God. There are examples found in the Qur'ān in which the Almighty has stated in the past tense a promise which is to be fulfilled in the future.

The undefined form of the expression لَيْلَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ is meant to express grandeur and majesty. Specific days, months and periods of time are regarded as blessed because of the gain and benefit they afford. Just as in our material world there exist various seasons suitable for certain crops and not every season is suitable for every crop, in a similar manner, the spiritual realm also contains times, months and years which have specific characteristics. The worship ritual which the Almighty has prescribed for a particular day and month will afford the desired blessings only when it is vigilantly undertaken at that particular time or day or month; otherwise, just as wheat sown in unfavourable seasons will not bear results, similarly, the prayer said at the wrong time, the fast observed at the wrong time and the *ḥajj* offered at the wrong time will not bear any result, and if they do and it would be marginal. In the twenty four hours of the day, the times of *fajr*, *chāsht*, *ẓuhr*, *'aṣr*, *maghrib*, *'ishā* and *tahajjud* carry special spiritual blessings. The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have explained these blessings. Similarly, Friday occupies special significance from among the other days of the week. Likewise, the month of Ramaḍān and that of *ḥajj* are uniquely important with regard to other months of the year. Similarly, one single night among the last ten nights of Ramaḍān has been

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reserved by the Almighty in which He informs His angels deputed to run the affairs of this world of the whole program of one year so that they can implement it at its prescribed time. The Almighty revealed the Qur'ān on one such night so that people could be warned through it and the mercy which was ordained in the advent of a messenger of God manifests itself.

The purpose to refer to all the revelation of the Qur'ān on this night is that its revelation is neither an accidental happening nor a concoction by the Prophet (sws); it is also not ill-suited and inappropriate to the requirements of time nor a product of fancy. On the contrary, it is the materialization of a scheme chalked out by the Almighty to guide His creatures. Thus He has revealed it on a night which is specifically reserved for the distribution of all wise matters. Hence, it is the duty of those for whom it has been revealed to duly honour it; otherwise, they should remember that the Almighty will never forgive their contrary attitude towards something He has revealed in such an elaborate manner. It is not a baseless thing which they can dismiss with a bout of laughter and make it dissipate in thin air. Accepting or rejecting it – both entail serious consequences which are bound to ensue.

The words اِنَّا كُنَّا مُرۡسِلِيۡنَ state the purpose for which the Qur'ān was revealed: it has remained part of the divine scheme that just as the Almighty conclusively warned previous nations of good and evil before destroying them, similarly, before the Arabs are punished for their insolence, He will fully and conclusively inform them. The purpose is to afford an opportunity to those who want to accept guidance to do so and leave others who do not want to do so with no excuse. In other words, the revelation of the Qur'ān and the advent of the Messenger of God are meant to convey the truth in such a manner that the addressees are left with no excuse to deny it. It is an established practice of God that once this is done, no nation is given any further respite. For this reason, every person should decide and act after fully contemplating that he is facing a decisive situation. He has to choose between two things: eternal kingdom or eternal doom.

فِيۡهَا يُفۡرَقُ كُلُّ اَمۡرٍ حَكِيۡمٍ ۙ﴿۴﴾[4]

This verse defines the nature of this blessed night: all wise affairs are distributed in it. If this verse is interpreted in the light of Sūrah al-Qadr, it will become evident that on this night the Almighty informs His closest angels about all the affairs of this earth, and these angels then pass on this information to the angels deputed on the earth in accordance with the scheme chalked out by God.

The word اَمۡرًا is qualified by حَكِيۡمٍ to point to the fact that no directive of God is devoid of wisdom. Whenever He decides to punish a nation, it is based on His justice and wisdom, and whenever He is merciful to a nation, this too is based on His justice

4. On this night, all wise matters are distributed.

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and wisdom.

This verse, in fact, sounds a warning to the addressees to seriously reflect on each and every aspect of the situation they are facing; if they continue to remain indifferent and do not fulfill the requirements of a divine scheme based on wisdom, then the consequences can be disastrous for them.

اَمۡرًا مِّنۡ عِنۡدِنَا ؕ اِنَّا كُنَّا مُرۡسِلِيۡنَ ۚ﴿۵﴾[5]

The word اَمۡرًا is declined in the accusative on account of *ikhtiṣāṣ* (specification), and the purpose is to highlight the importance and exaltedness of the distribution of affairs implying the fact that whatever happens, happens because of a special divine command; no one else has any say in this matter. Hence it is essential that people accept it in the capacity of a special command from the real sovereign of this universe, and follow each directive with true sentiments of obedience. If they reject them or make fun of them or deny them, then they should remember that this would be tantamount to rebellion against the real sovereign of this universe – the punishment for which is very grave.

The sentence اِنَّا كُنَّا مُرۡسِلِيۡنَ is of the same occasion as اِنَّا كُنَّا مُنۡذِرِيۡنَ. Just as the previous verse say that the purpose of revelation of the Qur'ān is to sound a warning, in the same manner, this verse states that it was pre-ordained in the scheme of God that He would send a Messenger to the Ishmaelites who would be a mercy for them as well as for the rest of the world. This is a reference to the predictions which are ascribed to Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) and which have already been cited earlier in this exegesis. In other words, what is implied is that this Messenger has been sent in accordance with this scheme and exactly on the night fixed by the Almighty for all such important affairs.

رَحۡمَةً مِّنۡ رَّبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ ۙ﴿۶﴾[6]

This verse alludes to the purpose of sending the Messenger and the prophet Muḥammad (sws) is addressed viz: your Lord has sent you as a great mercy; if people do not duly value you, this attitude will not be of harm to you; it will only deprive them of the greatest mercy of God.

Verse three mentions that a Messenger is a warner and it also says that he is a mercy and bearer of glad tidings. Both these features are two aspects of the same reality: the greatest mercy can become the greatest torment if it is not duly honoured.

It needs to be kept in mind that the aspect of warning is mentioned here first even though the real purpose of the revelation of the Qur'ān is to show mercy to mankind. The reason for this has already been pointed out earlier while discussing the central

5. As a special directive from Ourself. Indeed, We were to send a Messenger.

6. As a special blessing from your Lord. Indeed, He it is Who sees and hears.

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theme of this *sūrah*: the real tone of the *sūrah* is to sound a warning.

اِنَّهٗ هُوَالسَّمِيۡعُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ (indeed He hears and knows all): one aspect in citing these attributes at the end of the verse is to highlight the fact that the Lord of this universe is a wise and prudent being. He cannot let His creatures go scot-free. It is an essential requirement of these attributes that He keep an eye on the circumstances which befall His creatures and inform them of His directives; if they follow these, He rewards them in this world and in the next, and if they rebel against Him, He punishes them.

Another aspect in citing these attributes is that today whatever the leadership of the Quraysh is doing with the Book of God and his Messenger is fully in God's notice because He hears and knows all. When everything is in His knowledge and nothing is beyond His power, the Prophet (sws) and the believers should rest assured that whatever is a requisite of His wisdom will definitely materialize; nothing can hinder this.

In order to fully understand the premises put forward by these verses, readers are advised to look up what I have written under verses 45-46 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ.

رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَا ۘ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مُّوۡقِنِيۡنَ ۝ [7]

This is warning to the opponents of the Prophet (sws) and what a severe warning it is. They are told that these warnings and glad tidings should not be considered baseless and as being sounded to bluff them; they are from the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. The implication is that when He is the Lord and Master of everything, no one can have the power to impede any of His intentions which He wants to implement. He can seize people if and when He wants to; no one can save them, and if He wants to forgive people, no one can stop Him from doing so.

The words اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مُّوۡقِنِيۡنَ are meant to rebuke people: they are told that what is indicated above is obvious and self-evident; however, to believe in something does not require that it merely be obvious and self-evident; equally necessary is the will to believe in it. If this will is not found in a person, he can deny the most obvious of realities and the greatest of logicians is not able to convince him.

لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ يُحۡىٖ وَيُمِيۡتُ ؕ رَبُّكُمۡ وَرَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ۝ [8]

This verse stresses what is said earlier: there is no god except Him whose intercession can be of any use to them. Life and death are under His control. He is their Lord and also the Lord of their forefathers. If their forefathers worshipped some other deity, it is their foolishness and ignorance; they should not make blindly following them an argument in favour of their attitude otherwise they will end up

7. With His mercy Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you show conviction.

8. There is no god but Him. He only gives life and death. He is your Lord and also the Lord of your forefathers.

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harming their own selves to benefit others.

بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ يَّلْعَبُوْنَ ۝٩[9]

The verse implies that though these warnings and glad tidings are undeniable realities which no sane person can deny, however, these people are such slaves to their desires that they will not believe in anything they are being informed of unless they see it with their very eyes. For this reason, they are playing about in doubt and making fun.

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that it is not his responsibility to convince people who have adopted an indifferent attitude in life. These people will only get convinced when they will see the torment lashing them; hence the Prophet (sws) should leave these people to themselves.

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَاْتِي السَّمَآءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۝١٠ يَّغْشَى النَّاسَ ۭ هٰذَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۝١١[10]

The verses say that the Prophet (sws) should wait for the day when the sky will appear with a smoke palpable to everyone. It will engulf all and by its very existence declare to everyone that it is a grievous torment.

This is actually a threat of the punishment which people were demanding and were not prepared to acknowledge the warnings of the Prophet (sws) unless they were shown the punishment.

Here the question arises: what does دُخَانٍ مُّبِيْنٍ refer to? The word دُخَانٌ means "smoke" and the adjective مُبِيْنٌ which qualifies it shows it will appear to everyone, big or small, very clearly and no one will be mistaken about it.

One group of exegetes has answered this question by saying that the smoke will appear at the advent of the Day of Judgement.[11] They have also cited a narrative in support of this opinion; however, critics have dismissed it as a tale fabricated by story-tellers. In my opinion, this narrative is also against the context of the verses. Readers will see that the subsequent verses clearly show that this mention is not of the Day of Judgement but of the punishment which descends on nations who reject their respective messengers. Details of such a punishment have been mentioned in earlier *sūrahs* in the anecdotes of the peoples of 'Ād, Thamūd and Shu'ayb (rta).

Another group of exegetes[12] regards it to refer to a famine which in their opinion was inflicted on the Quraysh as a result of a prayer of doom for them by the Prophet (sws). Such was its intensity that people were forced to eat the meat of dead animals,

9. Yet they are in doubt, playing about.

10. So wait for the day when the sky will appear with a palpable smoke. That smoke will envelop people. This is a grave torment.

11. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 139. (*Translator*)

12. Ibid.

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and such was the situation of every person that when out of hunger he would look towards the sky, it would appear to have smoke all over it.

Generally, our exegetes have adopted this second view; however, there are many things which make me uncomfortable about it.

Firstly, it is only this exegetical narrative in which it is reported that the Prophet (sws) prayed for the doom of the whole of his nation; there exists no other corroborating evidence. The prayer of the Prophet (sws) always remained: رب اهد قومی فإنهم لا یعلمون (Lord! Guide my people because they are unaware).[13] The most precarious instance was that of migration to Madīnah. Some other messengers of God have prayed for the doom of their people at such instances but we find not a single word of this sort coming out of the mouth of the Prophet (sws) even at this instance. He is only reported to have said: "Makkah! You are very dear to me; but what can I do as the sons of your soil do not allow me to live here."[14]

Even at instances of war when the armies of Muslims and Quraysh faced one another, the prayers of the Prophet (sws) consisted of beseeching God to grant perseverance to the believers and to help them in their cause. If ever a word came out of his mouth against his enemies, it was nothing but a prayer to strike awe in their hearts and make them lose courage. I am unable to recall if at even such instances the Prophet (sws) ever prayed to God to harm his nation.

Secondly, the most precarious instance after migration was the truce of Ḥudaybiyah when the Quraysh's bias to emotional frenzy had become totally evident and the Muslims were stirred up against them to the ultimate extent. At this instance also, the Prophet (sws) did not pray for their doom; not only this, he even appeased the Muslims and stopped them from waging war and the wisdom which the Qur'ān has mentioned in stopping this war, as shall be explained later in Sūrah al-Fatḥ, is that if war had ensued there was a chance that harm might have come to people who were Muslims in their hearts but were not able to migrate to Madīnah yet because of compelling circumstances. One should consider the fact that if because of the Muslims who had concealed their faith Muslims abstained from any warfare and the Prophet (sws) entered into an agreement with the Quraysh which was against the general emotions of the Companions, how could he have prayed to God to inflict such a drought on the people of Makkah in which they would be forced to eat forbidden food items? If such a drought had ensued, merely the leaders of the Quraysh and Ṭā'if would not have been afflicted by it; its real target would have been the poor and the masses of which a great many were Muslims.

Thirdly, here the Prophet (sws) has neither been asked to pray for or against anyone; he has been asked to patiently wait for a day on which the sky will appear with such smoke that will spread over the whole nation and the very existence of this smoke will

13. See, for example: Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-manṭhūr*, vol. 7, 51.

14. See, for example: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 4, 305, no. 18739.

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be instrumental in reminding people of the same painful doom they had been informed of but which they kept making fun of. In other words, the smoke is like a threat and a threat depends on the circumstances which arise. The Qur'ān has repeatedly warned the Quraysh of the punishment similar to the one meted out to the 'Ād, the Thamūd, the people of Lot (sws) and Shu'ayb (sws) but such a punishment never visited the Quraysh. This is because the majority of the people of Arabia embraced faith. Very few miscreants persisted in their mischief and were either killed in battles against the believers or submitted to Islam at the conquest of Makkah.

Fourthly, it is linguistically inappropriate to describe a drought with the expression دُخَانٌ مُّبِينٌ (clear smoke). Droughts are portrayed many a time in classical Arabic poetry. When cold northern winds blew in Arabia, they would cause drought. In certain areas, the situation would become very severe. Arab poets depict very moving scenes of this drought and through various similes, metaphors and veiled references try to portray the whole situation; however, I do not recall any instance in which a poet has called the worst of droughts as دُخَانٌ مُّبِينٌ or adopted this style to describe its effects.

For these reasons, even if the narratives which report this drought are true, they cannot relate to this verse. There is a possibility that a drought befell and it is equally possible that it was very severe. It is a known practice of God that in the times of His messengers their people were afflicted with trials and tests to caution and prod them. The Qur'ān contains references to this practice of God. In spite of all these possibilities, this verse does not seem to relate to any drought whose severity was such that it made the sky appear as smoke to everyone.

The expression دُخَانٌ مُّبِينٌ leads the mind to think of the punishment of the *ḥāṣib* and not of any drought. This punishment had previously visited most nations of Arabia who had denied their respective messengers. The details of this punishment can be seen in the anecdotes of the 'Ād, Thamūd, the peoples of Shu'ayb (sws) and Lot (sws) mentioned in the earlier *sūrahs*. The picture which can be gauged of this punishment from the description of the Qur'ān and classical Arab poetry is very similar to دُخَانٌ مُّبِينٌ. In this punishment, a tall column of smoke is seen rising towards the sky. In this smoke, until the sun is fully hidden in it, the rays of the sun mingle with its particles as a result of which to onlookers it seems as if in some jungle a fire has erupted of which the smoke is rising to the sky. Then when the wind picks up and the storm heads in some direction, it seems as if black clouds are enveloping the place and are about to burst with rain. The storm then takes on a very horrid shape and engulfs whole cities with sand and stones. When the people of the 'Ād were visited by their punishment, they deemed the black smoke overspread above them to be a black cloud. In Sūrah al-Aḥqāf, this smoke is mentioned thus: فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُّسْتَقْبِلَ اَوْدِيَتِهِمْ قَالُوْا هٰذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهٖ رِيْحٌ فِيْهَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ (٤٦: ٢٤) (And when they saw the scourge in the form of a cloud heading for their valleys, they said: "This is a passing cloud that will drench us." "By no means! It is that what you had been seeking to hasten: it is a hurricane which

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contains a woeful scourge." (46:24)). In the destruction meted out to the people of Shu'ayb (rta), this punishment is called as: عَذَابُ يَوۡمِ الظُّلَّةِ. The verse reads: فَكَذَّبُوۡهُ فَاَخَذَهُمۡ عَذَابُ يَوۡمِ الظُّلَّةِ (۲۶: ۱۸۹) (so they denied it, as a result of which they were seized by the punishment of the day of *ẓullah*, (26:189)). The word الظُّلَّةِ (*ẓullah*) is used for an umbrella, roof and tent and is also used for clouds.

The punishment of *ḥāṣib* in its initial stages appears to be a rising cloud or smoke. Thus it is quite likely that this be a threat of the punishment of *ḥāṣib*. This threat had been sounded to the Quraysh by recounting before them the tales of the peoples of 'Ād, Thamūd and other nations. I have explained in great detail in the exegesis of the previous *sūrahs* the nature of punishments which visited these peoples. These details will also be referred to in the exegesis of the forthcoming *sūrahs*. At these instances, I will also *inshā'Allāh* present the research of my mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī in this regard.

This threat, as is indicated earlier, signifies that divine punishment is conditional to the rejection of the messenger of God. However, it is known that the majority of the idolaters of Arabia had gradually embraced faith and after the truce of Ḥudaybiyah circumstances arose which mellowed down the severity of the opposition. This situation reached the point that the Qur'ānic prediction of people entering the fold of Islam in large numbers mentioned in Sūrah al-Naṣr materialized to such an extent that everyone saw it with his own eyes. It is obvious that there was no need for the threat which was conditional to rejection to materialize after this mass conversion. Thus the Quraysh in their collective capacity remained shielded from divine punishment. Only those of their miscreants who attacked the Muslims were put to the sword while the remaining ones submitted as Muslims at the conquest of Makkah.

يَّغۡشَى النَّاسَ ؕ هٰذَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾[15]

This verse expresses the severity of the punishment: it will totally engulf people and no one will be able to find any escape route from it. The words هٰذَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ can be spoken or be an expression of the situation: everyone can see that this was not a temporary thing that would come and go; the wrath of God would break the backs.

رَبَّنَا اكۡشِفۡ عَنَّا الۡعَذَابَ اِنَّا مُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾[16]

The implication is that these people are showing great arrogance now and haughtily asking to bring about the punishment. However, once they encounter it, they will cry out: Lord! Deliver us from this punishment; we now embrace faith.

15. That smoke will envelop people. This is a grave torment.
16. Lord! Distance this torment from us; we are now believers.

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اَنّٰى لَهُمُ الذِّكْرٰى وَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوْا مُعَلَّمٌ مَّجْنُوْنٌ ﴿١٤﴾[17]

This is the answer which will be given to these people at that time: after the punishment descends, there will be no time to take heed; God has sent His messenger to them who conclusively delivered the truth to them; however, they arrogantly turned away from it, and went on to blame the messenger that he was being been taught and led by others and was inflicted with a morbid fear of punishment of the Day of Judgement. The time of repentance is now over. It was when the messenger was making his call that they had this time. They squandered that opportunity and now they have no option left.

Such an answer has been cited at many places in the Qur'ān for the arrogant who were about to be afflicted with divine punishment. Some of the arrogant have been given this answer by addressing them. Thus for example, about the Pharaoh, it is said: آٰلْـٰٔنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ (۱۰:۹۱) (now you have embraced faith and before this you were among the defiant, (10:91)). At another place, the words are: فَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا رَبَّنَآ اَخِّرْنَآ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ ۙ نُّجِبْ دَعْوَتَكَ وَنَتَّبِعِ الرُّسُلَ ۭ اَوَلَمْ تَكُوْنُوْٓا اَقْسَمْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ زَوَالٍ. (۱٤:٤٤) (So, after being seized by the punishment people who have wronged their souls will cry out: "Our Lord! Give us a little more respite, we will respond to your call and follow the prophets." At that time, they will be answered thus: "Would you people not swear before this that you would never leave your stance," (14:44)). In the verse under discussion, the same thing is said to them while not directly addressing them. These stylistic changes are governed by the eloquence of the discourse, and for people having a keen literary sense, do not need any explanation. In direct address, there exists sternness and in the indirect address, indifference is evident.

The charge of the Qurraysh that the Prophet (sws) was taught by some other people and it was this which he presented to them in the name of divine revelation has been mentioned at some other places in the Qur'an as well. This charge had been invented by the Quraysh to satisfy those who, after being influenced by the arguments of the Qur'an, were led to think that such an intelligent discourse could not be produced by an illiterate person without divine help. In order to disenchant such people from the Qur'ān, the Quraysh fabricated the story that the discourse was not the product of any divine revelation; it was only a conspiracy of some literate people; it is those people who secretly authored the discourse and this person presented it as divine revelation; the purpose of these people was to divide the nation. While making this allegation, they would also give the impression that some People of the Book as well as some non-Arabs were among the conspirers so that, in this manner, they could successfully incite the nationalistic emotions of the Arabs.

I have already alluded at an appropriate place in this exegesis to the real reason why

17. But what opportunity remains for them now to pay heed! An enlightening Messenger had come to them. So, they turned away from him and said: "A madman, taught by others!"

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they called the Prophet (sws) a man possessed. Briefly restated, the Quraysh in the first place felt that he was so overwhelmed with the fear of the punishment of the Hereafter that all the time he reminded people of it; in the second place, such was the extent of certitude in his tone that everyone being impressed by it would wonder that if he had not been sent by God, why would he forsake his own comfort while grieving for others. In order to dispel this impression in the people, the Quraysh started saying that just as a person becomes possessed with some things and keeps repeating them at every moment and keeps seeing those things everywhere, in a similar manner, this person too had become possessed and insane; he saw in every nook and corner what he imagined; there was no reality in it; it was only madness and insanity; why and wherefrom could punishment visit them?

اِنَّا كَاشِفُوا الْعَذَابِ قَلِيْلًا اِنَّكُمْ عَآئِدُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾[18]

The verse implies that what the Almighty could have done was that on their request defer punishment for them so that they could embrace faith; however, the truth is that even if God had acceded to their request they would again tread the same path which they were treading before the advent of the punishment. Those who are slaves of their desires adopt this attitude: when they are faced with a trial, they go to great lengths to show their repentance but when the trial ends, they walk away as if nothing had happened; neither had they made a commitment nor will such a thing happen again.

يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرٰى ۚ اِنَّا مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾[19]

The verse refers to the fact that even if they are let off in this world, this should not be any reason for assurance to them. They should remember the Day when the Almighty will seize them in a profound manner. This refers to the way they will be seized on the Day of Judgement. Whatever way nations are seized in this world, is nevertheless lesser in extent than how they will be seized in the Hereafter, which will be more abiding. On that Day, the Almighty will take full revenge from all the sinners.

Section II: Verses (17-33)

By citing historical references, the subsequent verses substantiate what is stated in the previous paragraph. In order to warn the Quraysh, the part of the story of Moses (sws) and Pharaoh is briefly recounted which makes it clear on them that the plot which the Pharaoh had contrived against Moses (sws) is the same which the Quraysh are plotting against the Messenger of God. The Almighty punished the Pharaoh and his followers and all their arrogance was brought to nothing. Similarly, these people

18. If We defer the torment for some time, you will do what you had been doing.
19. Remember the day when We will grasp intensely; on that day, We will take full revenge.

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too will be seized by God if they do not desist from their attitude. Readers may now proceed to study the subsequent verses.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَجَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿١٧﴾ اَنْ اَدُّوْٓا اِلَيَّ عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَّاَنْ لَّا تَعْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَاِنِّيْ عُذْتُ بِرَبِّيْ وَرَبِّكُمْ اَنْ تَرْجُمُوْنِ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوْا لِيْ فَاعْتَزِلُوْنِ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَعَا رَبَّهٗٓ اَنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ قَوْمٌ مُّجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَاَسْرِ بِعِبَادِيْ لَيْلًا اِنَّكُمْ مُّتَّبَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَاتْرُكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ كَمْ تَرَكُوْا مِنْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَّزُرُوْعٍ وَّمَقَامٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَّنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوْا فِيْهَا فٰكِهِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ كَذٰلِكَ ۫ وَاَوْرَثْنٰهَا قَوْمًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَآءُ وَالْاَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوْا مُنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَجَّيْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِيْنِ ﴿٣٠﴾ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَالِيًا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَقَدِ اخْتَرْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الْاٰيٰتِ مَا فِيْهِ بَلٰٓؤٌا مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

And before them, We tested the Pharaoh's people and a gracious messenger came to them with the message: "Hand over to me God's servants; I am for you a trustworthy messenger and that you should not be rebellious against God; I present to you a clear argument; and I seek refuge with My and Your Lord from you stoning me, and if you do not attest me, leave me to myself." (17-21)

Thus he prayed to his Lord that they are a sinful people. It was ordered: "Take along My servants with you in the night; beware! you shall be pursued." And leave the sea at rest; they will become an army drowned. (22-24)

How many orchards, fountains, cornfields, blissful abodes and pleasant things in which they took delight they left behind them! Thus do We deal with the wrongdoers; and what was once theirs We gave to others. So, neither the heavens nor the earth shed tears for them; nor were they given reprieve. (25-29)

And We saved the Israelites from a humiliating punishment that is from the Pharaoh. Indeed, he was a great tyrant and a transgressor. And knowingly We gave them preference to all the world, and showed them signs in which there was an open reward. (30-33)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَجَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿١٧﴾[20]

At a number of places, the Qur'ān has referred to the similarities between the Quraysh and the people of the Pharaoh. Here too, this reference is present. The implication is that just as at the time of the Prophet's advent, the Almighty has put the Quraysh through a test, He put the people of the Pharaoh through a similar test earlier.

20. And before them, We tested the Pharaoh's people and a gracious messenger came to them.

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Just as the Quraysh are affluent and have abundant resources, the people of the Pharaoh too had the same abundance. Then just as a noble messenger was sent to the Quraysh to conclusively communicate the truth to them, similarly, a noble messenger was sent to the Pharaoh and his people. The purpose of this mention obviously is to let the Quraysh know that they too will meet the same fate as that of the Pharaoh and his people if they adopt the same attitude.

It is clearly evident from these details that whatever wealth and honour nations receive in this world are a trial and test from God. By blessing them with such favours, He wants to see whether they become grateful and serve Him or become rebellious and tyrannical. If they adopt the latter of these attitudes, they are given a little respite after which the Almighty totally wipes them out.

The attribute كَرِيْمٌ (noble) which qualifies the word رَسُوْلٌ (messenger) signifies the fact that since a messenger is an envoy of the God of the worlds, nobility and respect are an essential part of his status; the question whether he is rich or poor or whether he belongs to the royal family of the Pharaoh or to a poor family of the Israelites whom the Pharaoh and his followers regard to be slaves and unworthy does not even arise. The real status of the messenger is that He is an envoy of God and only God is more noble than His envoy; no one else is or can be nobler than him.

اَنْ اَدُّوْٓا اِلَيَّ عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿۱۸﴾[21]

A genitive particle (حرف جر) is suppressed before the letter اَنْ. The meaning after taking this suppression in consideration would be: the noble messenger came with the message that the servants of God should be consigned to him. This is the same directive which is given in Sūrah Ṭāhā by the words: فَاَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ (so send with me the Israelites, (20:47)). The difference between the two is that in the verse under discussion, Moses (sws) has also mentioned the reason for making this demand: no one has the right to make the servants of God his own servants; thus these servants should be allowed to go with him so that they are able to serve and worship God the way they want to without any hindrance. The question of the destination where Moses (sws) wanted to take the Israelites has been discussed at many places of this exegesis. Restating it is not required; what is evident is that Moses (sws) wanted the Israelites to have complete freedom to serve and worship God. He was not prepared to give the Pharaoh the right to make them his own servants.

By the words اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ, Moses (sws) has tried to assure the Pharaoh and his courtiers that he is not an impostor or a phony; but that he is in fact God's messenger and is delivering to them with full honesty and integrity the message God has given him to deliver to them. Moses (sws) did not utter these words merely to absolve

21. With the message: "Hand over to me God's servants; I am for you a trustworthy messenger."

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himself of impersonation; concealed in them is also a threat: if they reject him by regarding him an impostor, the consequences will be very grave. He Who has sent him as a messenger, will necessarily take revenge from them.

وَاَنْ لَّا تَعْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٩﴾[22]

These words constitute the message which Moses (sws) was required to deliver to the Israelites: they should plainly accept this directive of God. If they adopt a tyrannical attitude, then this tyranny will not be merely against Moses (sws); it will primarily be against God because Moses (sws) is merely an envoy of God.

The words اِنِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ refer to the miracles of the staff and the white hand given to Moses (sws). In other words, he holds a very clear sanction that he is God's envoy and shows these miracles to the Israelites so that they are left with no doubt about his veracity. Since Moses (sws) was sent to a very tyrannical and oppressive king, the Almighty from the very beginning armed him with such miracles which could convey his veracity to his opponents.

وَاِنِّيْ عُذْتُ بِرَبِّيْ وَرَبِّكُمْ اَنْ تَرْجُمُوْنِ ﴿٢٠﴾[23]

These words were uttered by Moses (sws) when his demand to let the Israelites go with him had caused great commotion among the Copts. At that time, his life had also been threatened, and there was a chance that his nation might lose its mind and stone him to death. At that time, he proclaimed to the people that if they intended to stone him, he would seek refuge with his Lord Who was also their Lord. The words وَرَبِّكُمْ (and also your Lord) have a very effective appeal in them, a very subtle call to the truth and a very austere warning; concealed in these words is also the sarcasm that while being led away by the big devil who poses himself as their "great Lord" they should not do something which dooms the whole nation.

وَاِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوْا لِيْ فَاعْتَزِلُوْنِ ﴿٢١﴾[24]

The words imply that if these people are not ready to believe that Moses (sws) is God's envoy, then at least they should not besmear themselves with the sin of killing or stoning him to death and that they should leave him to himself. They should let him take along the Israelites to wherever he wants to take them; it would have been better if they believed in what he said and professed faith in him; this act would have ensured their success in both this world and the next. If they cannot do this, then at least they should not cause hindrance to his mission.

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22. "And that you should not be rebellious against God; I present to you a clear argument."
23. "And I seek refuge with My and Your Lord from you stoning me."
24. "And if you do not attest me, leave me to myself."

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فَدَعَا رَبَّهٗۤ اَنَّ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ قَوْمٌ مُّجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾[25]

The Copts were not the least moved by this appeal made by Moses (sws). They continued to conspire and plan against him. At last, Moses (sws) pleaded to his Lord thus: "Lord! These people will not listen to and accept my call; they are chronic criminals; only you can save me from their grasp."

فَاَسْرِ بِعِبَادِیْ لَیْلًا اِنَّكُمْ مُّتَّبَعُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾[26]

Moses (sws) made this invocation at the right time, and hence it was accepted forthwith. It was not even deemed necessary to say a few words of immediate acceptance of this invocation which showed that Moses (sws) was as a result directed to do what this verse states. He was directed to take along with him the servants of God during the night, and he was also warned that he would be followed. This warning was given because though the Pharaoh was frustrated at the calamities which befell Egypt because of Moses' invocation to God and therefore allowed Moses (sws) to take them away for a few days. When Moses (sws) embarked upon the journey with the whole nation, the Pharaoh changed his mind. He realized that he had made a mistake in giving him this permission. He immediately went in pursuit of them, with all his regional leaders, so that he could force them to come back. The Almighty had already informed Moses (sws) of this so that there was no delay in his march with his people and they would be able to cross the sea at the appointed time.

وَاتْرُكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾[27]

The word رَهْو means "standing still." The implication is that Moses (sws) should leave the sea before the dying down of the wind which God would use to part the sea and make way for them. As soon as they left the sea, it would become calm and the displaced water would come back to its position. During this time the Egyptians while pursuing them would be within the sea and water would engulf them in a manner that they would neither be able to move backward nor forward.

كَمْ تَرَكُوْا مِنْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُیُوْنٍ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَّ زُرُوْعٍ وَّ مَقَامٍ كَرِیْمٍ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَّ نَعْمَةٍ كَانُوْا فِیْهَا فٰكِهِیْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾[28]

The verse implies that they would become prey to the waves of the sea while being deprived of the orchards, fountains, crop fields, grand mansions and luxury items which had made them arrogant. They reckoned that these things were a guarantee of

25. Thus he prayed to his Lord that they are a sinful people.

26. It was ordered: "Take along My servants with you in the night; beware! you shall be pursued."

27. And leave the sea at rest; they will become an army drowned.

28. How many orchards, fountains, cornfields, blissful abodes and pleasant things in which they took delight they left behind them!

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their success and development, and those who threatened them with destruction were absolutely insane. However, it was proven to the contrary that without the fear of God these things were a prelude to destruction and when destruction came none of these things were of any benefit.

كَذٰلِكَ ۖ وَاَوْرَثْنٰهَا قَوْمًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾[29]

The words نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِيْنَ are suppressed after كَذٰلِكَ because of textual indication. The meaning would be: "We did with them what we do with sinners and thus shall We do in the future." The next part of the verse means that the Almighty made others the owners of these things. "Others" do not refer to the Israelites. It is not established that once the Israelites left Egypt, they returned later. It is possible that "others" refer to neighbouring nations which the Pharaoh and his companions constantly feared would join hands with the Israelites and occupy Egypt. It is evident from the Torah that the motive of the campaign of killing the male members of the Israelites had been launched for fear that if the Israelites increased in number they might join hands with the enemies and pose a threat for the Pharaoh and his people.

فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَآءُ وَالْاَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوْا مُنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾[30]

The verse refers to the fact that as long as the Pharaoh and his nation remained in power, they thought that they were the pioneers of a great civilization and culture and that the whole world would remain under the burden of their favour, but neither did the heavens nor the earth shed a tear on their destruction; in fact, they heaved a sigh of relief at the extirpation of their filthy existence from this world.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that the heavens and the earth do cry at the death of an innocent being who has been the target of oppression. It is stated in the Torah (Genesis, 4:10) that the blood of Abel cries out to the Lord from the earth.[31] However, at the death and destruction of the oppressor and the defiant both the heavens and the earth rejoice – especially at the destruction of the defiant to whom the Almighty has conclusively conveyed the truth through His messengers.

وَلَقَدْ نَجَّيْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِيْنِ ﴿٣٠﴾ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَالِيًا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[32]

The words مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ are a permutative (*badal*) from الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِيْنِ. In other words, the Almighty has dubbed the Pharaoh as a humiliating punishment. The Pharaoh regarded Moses (sws) and all his people to be lowly; however, to God it was the Pharaoh who

29. Thus do We deal with the wrongdoers; and what was once theirs We gave to others.

30. So, neither the heavens nor the earth shed tears for them; nor were they given reprieve.

31. See: Genesis, 4:19.

32. And We saved the Israelites from a humiliating punishment that is from the Pharaoh. Indeed, he was a great tyrant and a transgressor.

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was not only lowly but a humiliating punishment.

The words اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَالِيًا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ express why the Pharaoh is regarded as a humiliating punishment. The Qur'ān says that this is because he was very rebellious and among those who transgress the bounds set by God. People who rebel against God are a punishment for the oppressed and shall stand humiliated before God.

وَلَقَدِ اخْتَرْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾[33]

The verse implies that while the Almighty had the Pharaoh and his people drowned, He chose the Israelites – who had been trampled upon by them – for the guidance of the world. It may be kept in mind that a nation who is made the recipient of God's *sharī'ah* is naturally the most capable and worthy of guiding people. However, this position is conditional to the fact that it will discharge with full honesty the responsibility imposed on it by virtue of this position. If it does not discharge this responsibility, the Almighty confiscates this position and consigns it to others. In a particular period of time, the Israelites were given this position but when they did not remain worthy of it they were deposed and the responsibility of guiding people was entrusted to the Muslim *ummah*.

The words عَلٰى عِلْمٍ allude to the philosophy of history: the rise and fall of nations in this world does not occur by chance; it is the Almighty Who selects a nation which meets His standards and those who do not are rejected by Him. The message which can be gauged from this is that those who have been deposed of this position should censure themselves on their own inability instead of blaming others, and those who are sovereign should show gratitude to God instead of being overcome by pride and arrogance and should discharge their responsibilities. The rise and fall of nations which takes place in this world is according to a divine design and its basis depends on the moral conduct of nations. God's knowledge is inerrant and His wisdom is unbiased.

These verses very sternly warn the Israelites who during the time of their revelation were opposing the Qur'ān and Muḥammad (sws). This warning does not require any explanation. If they had only understood that the Almighty chose them on the basis of His knowledge, and now on the basis of that very knowledge had decided that they were no longer worthy of it, they would have saved themselves from the evil fate that they faced as a consequence of their opposition to Islam.

وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الْاٰيٰتِ مَا فِيْهِ بَلٰٓؤٌا مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۳۳﴾[34]

The real meaning of the word بَلَاء is "trial" and "test." However, this trial can come through blessings and favours as well as through calamities and hardships. The former trial is to test whether people remain grateful or not and the latter trial is to test

33. And knowingly We gave them preference to all the world.

34. And showed them signs in which there was an open reward.

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whether people remain patient or not. Contextual indications show that in this verse this word is used in the first of these meanings just as in verse 17 of Sūrah al-Anfāl it has been mentioned with the adjective حَسَنًا. The reference is to the favours which the Almighty granted them in a variety of ways while they were crossing the desert and later in the life they spent in the desert and in the conquest of Palestine as well as in later phases. Their details are mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Section III: Verses (34-59)

In the succeeding verses, the real reason for the rebelliousness of the Quraysh is highlighted: they do not imagine that there is life after this worldly existence; for this reason they are engrossed in the present and unmindful of the future. In order to remove this misconception of theirs, first the intellectual and natural arguments which substantiate the law of reward and punishment are cited. After this, the fate of both the believers and the disbelievers is depicted.

Readers may now proceed to recite these verses.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا مَوْتَتُنَا الْاُوْلٰى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنْشَرِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَاْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اَهُمْ
خَيْرٌ اَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ۙ وَّالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۭ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ ۡ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
لٰعِبِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ مَا خَلَقْنٰهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيْقَاتُهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِيْ
مَوْلًى عَنْ مَّوْلًى شَيْـــًٔا وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٤٢﴾ اِنَّ شَجَرَتَ الزَّقُّوْمِ ﴿٤٣﴾ طَعَامُ
الْاَثِيْمِ ﴿٤٤﴾ كَالْمُهْلِ ۚ يَغْلِيْ فِي الْبُطُوْنِ ﴿٤٥﴾ كَغَلْيِ الْحَمِيْمِ ﴿٤٦﴾ خُذُوْهُ فَاعْتِلُوْهُ اِلٰى سَوَآءِ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٤٧﴾ ثُمَّ صُبُّوْا فَوْقَ رَاْسِهٖ
مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيْمِ ﴿٤٨﴾ ذُقْ ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْكَرِيْمُ ﴿٤٩﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَمْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ مَقَامٍ اَمِيْنٍ
﴿٥١﴾ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿٥٢﴾ يَّلْبَسُوْنَ مِنْ سُنْدُسٍ وَّاِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُّتَقٰبِلِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ كَذٰلِكَ ۭ وَزَوَّجْنٰهُمْ بِحُوْرٍ عِيْنٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ يَدْعُوْنَ
فِيْهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ لَا يَذُوْقُوْنَ فِيْهَا الْمَوْتَ اِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْاُوْلٰى ۚ وَوَقٰىهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ۭ ذٰلِكَ
هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿٥٧﴾ فَاِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنٰهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ فَارْتَقِبْ اِنَّهُمْ مُّرْتَقِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾

These people emphatically say: "We shall die only this first death and after this we shall not be raised to life; so bring back to us our fathers, if you are truthful." (34-36)

Are they better or the people of Tubba' and those who were before them? We destroyed them. Indeed, they were a defiant people. (37)

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them for amusement. We did not create them but for a purpose, but most of them are not aware of this fact. Indeed, the Day of Judgement is the appointed time for all. On that Day, no

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relative shall be of any benefit to a relative nor shall they be helped. Except those to whom God shows mercy. Indeed, He alone is the Mighty One, the Merciful. (38-42)

The tree of the Zaqqūm shall be the food of the sinners. Like dregs of oil; it will sizzle in the belly the way hot water sizzles. Seize him and drag him into the depths of Hell; then pour out the punishment of hot water over his head. Taste this! You posed to be very powerful and honourable. This is the very thing about which you remained doubtful. (43-50)

As for the righteous, they shall dwell in a peaceful place amid gardens and fountains. They will be dressed in *sundus* and *istabraq* sitting opposite one another. Thus shall be the God-fearing treated. And We shall wed them to large-eyed houris. They shall ask for every kind of fruit, with peace. Here, after their first death, they shall not taste death again and God protected them from the torment of Hell. This will be specially because of your God's grace. This indeed is great success. (51-57)

Explanation

اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا مَوْتَتُنَا الْاُوْلٰى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنْشَرِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾[35]

The verse states that these people very emphatically claim that the threat of the Day of judgement is mere bluff. Death is only faced once – and that is in this world. There is no other death or life after this.

فَاْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾[36]

In order to substantiate their claim stated earlier, they would demand of the believers to bring back any of their forefathers to life if they were truthful in saying that there is life after death; if the believers met their demand, they would regard life after death to be a reality. This subject is discussed in Sūrah al-Jāthiyah in the following words: وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوا ائْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ. (٤٥:٢٥) (and when Our clear verses about life after death are recited to them, their only argument is: "if you are true in your claim, bring back to us our fathers!" (45:25)). The Qur'ān has regarded this to be their only argument, and after referring to it has just ignored it and not even refuted it. This is an allusion to the fact that such is the nonsensical nature of their only argument in which they take pride that it does not even need to be commented upon.

اَهُمْ خَيْرٌ اَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ۙ وَّالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۭ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ ۡ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾[37]

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35. These people emphatically say: "We shall die only this first death and after this we shall not be raised to life."

36. "So, bring back to us our fathers, if you are truthful."

37. Are they better or the people of Tubba' and those who were before them? We destroyed

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The nation of Tubba' refers to the Tabābi'ah of Yemen who were very famous in Arabia because of their material might and advancement as well as for their intellectual abilities. Arab poets have eulogized them a lot.

In response to the previously mentioned claim of the Quraysh, the Qur'ān has asked them to speak up if they are superior to the nation of the Tubba' viz a viz material might and advancement and intellectual abilities, and if in spite of the superiority of the nation of the Tubba' the Almighty destroyed them – neither did their material might benefit them nor their intellectual prowess; so what is the reason for the arrogance of the Quraysh thinking that no one will be able to seize them? When the Almighty destroyed people more powerful than them, why can't He destroy them? Earlier nations too met with a similar fate. The people of the 'Ād, the Thamūd and some other nations were superior to the Quraysh in every respect; but when they became rebellious against God, the Almighty destroyed them. So what superiority and eminence do the Quraysh have that they will always remain in favour with God even though they are more rebellious than these ancient nations? What counts for God is character and morality and not material wealth and riches nor grand mansions nor atom bombs and missiles. When nations become morally corrupt, the Almighty destroys them with the very same bombs they made to destroy other nations, and thus they are forced to commit suicide with their own weapons.

Examples of God's law of retribution are found in this world and are found so abundantly that they are uncountable. So why should such a Day of reward and punishment be doubted on which the Almighty shall reward and punish individuals the way He rewarded and punished nations in this world.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لٰعِبِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ مَا خَلَقْنٰهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾[38]

In the afore-mentioned paragraphs, historical evidence as well as evidence from the world around man was presented to substantiate reward and punishment. In these verses, argument for the same is drawn from the attributes of God and from what they morally and intellectually entail. The verse states that the Almighty has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them for amusement; on the contrary, He has created them for a higher purpose and a true objective. It is an essential requirement of this true objective that one day this world cease to exist and after that a day come when the Creator rewards those who spent their lives in accordance with God's will, and punishes those who remained disobedient. If such a day does not come and this world continues without end or ends abruptly such that neither its pious inhabitants are rewarded nor the evil ones punished, then this means that its Creator,

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them. Indeed, they were a defiant people.

38. And We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them for amusement. We did not create them but for a purpose, but most of them are not aware of this fact.

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God forbid, is a merry-maker who while sitting in the heavens is witnessing a drama of the oppressor and the oppressed, and when He gets bored from watching this drama, He will dismantle this world or perhaps this drama will continue unabated forever. Obviously, this notion is such a wrong estimation about the merciful and wise creator of this world that cannot even be imagined. It is strange however that the majority is inflicted with this notion and is absolutely unaware of its consequences.

The fact that this is a deviant notion has been explained in detail in the exegesis of the previous *sūrahs*. Hence, I will content myself here with this brief comment.

اِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيْقَاتُهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ﴿۴۰﴾[39]

Stated in this verse is the essential outcome of the fact that this world has been created with a true objective: it is against the knowledge, justice, wisdom and mercy of God that this world continues the way it is or ends abruptly; it is essential that a day come in which the Almighty sits in His chair of justice and decides the affairs of all. As a result, those who spent their lives in an upright manner will be rewarded and those who spent their lives in transgression and usurpation will be bear punishment. That day will be the day on which perfect justice manifests itself and no one will escape from it. The small and the big, the rulers and the ruled, the beggar and the king – all will be called to justice and such will be this justice that neither will any reality remain hidden nor will anyone be able to cause hindrance to the justice being dispensed. The word اَجْمَعِيْنَ should be specially paid attention to.

يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِىْ مَوْلًى عَنْ مَّوْلًى شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ۙ﴿۴۱﴾[40]

The word مَوْلًى is used for members of a family and tribe who are related to a person through his blood and lineage and who have mutual feelings of support and unity. The verse states that that day will be of such selfishness that no relative will be of any benefit to another relative.

The expression وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ points to the fact that there will be no other source of help either. It is evident from contextual indication that this help refers to the help which the Idolaters of Arabia expected from their deities.

اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿۴۲﴾[41]

The verse says that on that day only those who are blessed with God's grace will succeed and only those receive His grace who are worthy of it. God is powerful and at the same time He is also merciful. No one will be able to bail out people seized by

39. Indeed, the Day of Judgement is the appointed time for all.
40. On that Day, no relative shall be of any benefit to a relative nor shall they be helped.
41. Except those to whom God shows mercy. Indeed, He alone is the Mighty One, the Merciful.

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Him. And no one will be able to deprive people who are worthy of His mercy. In other words, people should fear Him alone and expect mercy from Him alone as well.

اِنَّ شَجَرَتَ الزَّقُّوْمِ ﴿٤٣﴾ طَعَامُ الْاَثِيْمِ ﴿٤٤﴾ كَالْمُهْلِ ۚ يَغْلِيْ فِي الْبُطُوْنِ ﴿٤٥﴾ كَغَلْيِ الْحَمِيْمِ ﴿٤٦﴾[42]

Earlier, the Day of Judgment was mentioned. Here what will befall the sinners as a result of the verdicts delivered therein is depicted. It is stated that the tree of cactus will provide subsistence to the sinners. This cactus is the cactus of Hell; hence, only God knows what it actually is. We can only vaguely imagine it by drawing an analogy from the cactus of this world. We cannot grasp what it actually is.

People have translated the word مُهْل variously. By giving preference to its etymological construction, I have translated it as the sediment of oil. The verses say that it will seethe in the bellies of the sinners the way the sediment of oil does, and shall sizzle the way water sizzles.

In other words, this food will boil the way the sediment of sour oil boils viz a viz its intensity, heat and bitterness and will sizzle like sizzling water. When oil is heated, it gets very hot but it does not sizzle; when water is heated it sizzles as well. Here in this simile both facets of heating are combined.

خُذُوْهُ فَاعْتِلُوْهُ اِلٰى سَوَآءِ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٤٧﴾ ثُمَّ صُبُّوْا فَوْقَ رَاْسِهٖ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيْمِ ﴿٤٨﴾[43]

Giving due consideration to eloquence, it is suppressed that the above words will be proclaimed to these people from God. The source of this proclamation is not mentioned; only the proclamation itself is cited. In other words, the wardens of Hell will be directed to seize these people and drag them to the depth of Hell and spill buckets of boiling water on them as a sizzling punishment.

ذُقْ ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْكَرِيْمُ ﴿٤٩﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَمْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾[44]

This statement can be an expression of the situation that will befall these people and it can also be interpreted to be made by the wardens. Each one of them will be told that they posed to be very powerful and honourable in the previous world and as a result arrogantly denied this Day; today they should taste its torment; this is the same thing about which they created all sorts of doubts.

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42. The tree of the Zaqqūm shall be the food of the sinners. Like the sediment of oil; it will sizzle in the belly the way hot water sizzles.

43. Seize him and drag him into the depths of Hell; then pour out the punishment of hot water over his head.

44. Taste this! You posed to be very powerful and honourable. This is the very thing about which you remained doubtful.

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إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي مَقَامٍ أَمِينٍ ﴿٥١﴾ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٥٢﴾[45]

After depicting the fate of the sinners, the verses portray the fate of the God-fearing: they will reside in a peaceful place; they will neither have any fear there nor any sorrow. They will be amidst orchards and fountains, and they will have no fear that anyone snatch away these blessings from them or that the blessings cease or that they be regarded accountable for any of them.

يَلْبَسُونَ مِن سُندُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾[46]

Sundus (سُنْدُس) and *istbaraq* (اِسْتَبْرَق) are the names of silk cloth. Some people have distinguished between them with regard to their thickness. However, since these fabrics belong to Paradise, such a distinction is unimportant. Only God knows what actually they will be like.

The word مُّتَقَابِلِينَ here refers to the fact that these people will face one another. As per the linguistic construction of the verses, verbs like يَجْلِسُوْنَ (sitting) or يَتَّكِئُوْنَ (sitting while being supported by cushions etc) will be considered as understood to be present here. In other words, they will be sitting face to face wearing attires of *sundus* and *istabraq*. Sitting facing one another shows that they will be dear to one another and will enjoy the confidence of one another. Since they gave noble advice to one another in the previous world, its noble recompense will be evident to them. For this reason, they will sit with one another whole heartedly. On the other hand, the disbelievers and their leaders will hurl insults at each other.

كَذَٰلِكَ وَزَوَّجْنَاهُم بِحُورٍ عِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِنِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾[47]

The verse states that as culmination of their bliss, the Almighty will have them wedded to large-eyed houris, In Arabic literature, this epithet signifies the pinnacle of beauty of a woman.

The subsequent verse says that for them will be all kinds of fruit in abundance. Whatever fruit they want, they will demand from dutiful attendants. Neither will they have any fear of reduction in fruits nor any fear of being deprived of this bliss nor will they have any fear of death. They will be shielded from all fears and enjoy eternal bliss.

لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولَىٰ وَوَقَاهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكَ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٥٧﴾[48]

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45. As for the righteous, they shall dwell in a peaceful place amid gardens and fountains.

46. They will be dressed in *sundus* and *istabraq* sitting opposite one another.

47. Thus shall be the God-fearing treated. And We shall wed them to large-eyed houris. They shall ask for every kind of fruit, with peace.

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The word الْأُوْلٰى (the first) implies that after the death they tasted in this world, they will never taste it again. Both their life and its pleasure will be abiding. They are rid of death and their Lord shielded them from Hell. This is a special favour to them by the Prophet's Lord, and this, in reality, is the supreme triumph and not the one which the slaves of this world have given their hearts to and have been so infatuated with their love that they think that the life of this world is all that there is; after this, there is no life or death.

Section IV: Verses (58-59)

Readers may recall that this *sūrah* began with the mention of the Qur'ān's exaltedness: it is indeed a great favour which the Almighty has blessed the Arabs with. If they duly honour and value it, they will be blessed with great success both in this world and in that to come. However, if out of arrogance they do not duly value it, they should remember that this great favour can become an equally great torment for them, and they will only hasten their own destruction both in this world and in that to come. After this introductory topic, the *sūrah* went on to state arguments which substantiate the veracity of the Qur'ān. Now at the end, the same subject discussed in the introduction is recalled from a new aspect. It is as if the *sūrah* ends on the same subject with which it began. Several examples of this style of similarity between the opening and the closing verses of a *sūrah* can be seen in earlier *sūrahs.* In the speeches of eloquent orators as well, a subtle example of this style can be seen. An orator generally ends his speech by reminding the audience of the topic with which he began it. This is because a complete reminder is sounded to them in the end.

Readers may now proceed to recite the verses.

Text and Translation

فَاِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنٰهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾ فَارْتَقِبْ اِنَّهُمْ مُّرْتَقِبُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾

Thus We have efficiently adorned this Qur'ān in your own tongue so that they may receive reminder. Wait you then; they too are waiting. (59)

Explanation

فَاِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنٰهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾[49]

The letter فَ indicates the affinity with the subject of the previous sections of the

48. Here, after their first death, they shall not taste death again and God protected them from the torment of Hell. This will be specially because of your God's grace. This indeed is great success.

49. Thus We have efficiently adorned this Qur'ān in your own tongue so that they may receive reminder.

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sūrah. The aspect in which this affinity exists is already referred to above.

The word تَيْسِيْر means to make something appropriate and suitable for a purpose and to make it firm and sound in all aspects. The expression يَسَّرَ الفَرَسَ لِلرُّكُوْب would mean to make a horse ready for riding by adorning it with a bridle, saddle, stirrups and other relevant things. The expression يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ would mean to adorn the Qur'ān with all that is necessary to make it appropriate for education and reminding. People who have interpreted this verse to mean that the Qur'ān is a very easy and bland book have not been able to grasp the essence of the word. No doubt that the Qur'ān is also an easy book; however, this ease is a reference to its higher objective of teaching and reminding people for which the Almighty has revealed it. This objective has multifarious aspects, and since the Qur'ān comprehensively covers all these aspects as well as their essential consequences, it contains many difficult and intricate aspects. However, to effectively communicate these aspects to the hearts of people, it has adopted such majestic styles which cannot be emulated by anyone. However, these things themselves require deep deliberation because they relate to wisdom, and wisdom requires deep deliberation. I have alluded to some aspects of this issue in the explanation of verse 97 of Sūrah Maryam and God willing, I will attempt to shed more light on this issue in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Qamar.

The word بِلِسَانِكَ refers to the pure and unadulterated language of the Quraysh which was the best archetype of eloquent Arabic, and the Prophet (sws) was the best exemplar of this eloquent Arabic. This is a reference to a very important aspect of the *taysīr* of the Qur'ān: to conclusively communicate the truth to the Quraysh, the Almighty has revealed this Book in the language of the Prophet (sws) which is the best exemplar of the language of the Quraysh. If they do not understand the Qur'ān even in this language, then this is no fault of the Book; rather, it is their own fault for which the Prophet (sws) is not responsible.

The words لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ express the purpose of the revelation of the Qur'ān in a very elaborate and thorough manner: to receive reminder. This means that they be reminded of whatever the Almighty has inherently granted their intellect and nature, learn a lesson from the signs which are found within man and in the world outside him and bear in mind the guidance received from the previous prophets, in particular their great ancestor Abraham (sws). The Qur'ān is reminding them of all these things in the best of languages and in the best of styles. Concealed in these words is also the warning that if they are not prepared to be reminded, then they should get ready to meet the fate destined by God for such rebellious people. Moreover, their own history also reminds them of this fate.

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فَارْتَقِبْ اِنَّهُمْ مُّرْتَقِبُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾[50]

This verse clearly expresses the hidden warning that was concealed in the previous verse. In other words, if these people are not prepared to benefit from this Book and insist that they will only believe after observing the punishment they are being threatened with, then like them, the Prophet (sws) too should wait for this punishment. On this punishment hinges the judgement. Readers may take a look at the explanation of verse 10.

By the grace of God, with these lines, I come to the end of the exegesis of this *sūrah*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى اِحْسَانِهٖ (so gratitude be to God for His favour).

Raḥmānābād,
22nd May 1976 AD
22nd Jumādī al-Thanī 1396 AH

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50. Wait you then; they too are waiting.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Jāthiyah (45)

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Sūrah al-Jāthiyah

Central Theme and relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of the previous one with regard to its name, introductory verses and basic meanings. The difference is that of brevity and explanation. The Quraysh are told in it that every part of the heavens and the earth is replete with arguments which substantiate monotheism and the Hereafter and God has also detailed them out in His Book; they are warned and threatened in explicit words that if they are not being able to understand these arguments, then they, in fact, cannot understand anything of this world; their matter now rests with God; He will take a decision in this regard.

Muslims are given glad tidings in unequivocal words that with patience they should bear the circumstances they are facing. If they resolutely adhere to their stance, theirs shall be the final victory. The hardships they will bear for this cause will not go waste; God will richly recompense them for this steadfastness.

This *sūrah* belongs to the time when the Jews had started to openly support the Quraysh. For this reason, the Jews too are rebuked very blatantly that because of their misdeeds they have been deposed from the position of religious and political leadership which God had bestowed on them. Now their matter will be presented in the court of God, and He will then pass a verdict about their fate. At the same time, Muslims are warned to stick to the radiant path God has made evident to them and to be aware of these evil religious people. They are trying hard to force Muslims to adopt the innovations they have fabricated and thereby deprive them of the path of God the way they have deprived themselves of it.

Analysis of the Meanings

Verses (1-6): This Qur'ān has been revealed by God in a thorough and elaborate manner. The arguments to substantiate the belief of monotheism it is calling people to and the Day of reward and punishment it is threatening people with are present in every nook and corner of the heavens and the earth. The creation of man, the alternation of day and night, the descent of rain, the appearance of its blessings on earth, the movement of the winds – all contain very clear signs of the belief of monotheism and of the Hereafter – only if they reflect and are prepared to accept the consequences of this reflection. It is these facts which the Qur'ān is presenting. If people are not being able to understand these clear facts, then after them what is it that they will understand and

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acknowledge.

Verses (7-11): The ringleaders of the creed of polytheism who have fabricated a false religion and have become so ardent in blindly supporting it that they are not willing to listen to the words of God are warned. When the Book of God is recited before them, they walk away with such arrogance as if they had heard nothing. If they come to realize that anything presented is very potent for the hearts, they start mocking it in order to reduce its influence. These people should remember that this display of arrogance will lead them to their doom and when they will be cast into Hell, their treasures and riches which they obtained through illegal means will be of no avail to them nor will their alleged deities they had fabricated and associated with God be of any benefit to them.

Verses (12-15): Some arguments in support of monotheism are presented in a new style and Muslims are urged to show patience and perseverance. They should not the slightest care about the nonsensical talk of the idolaters; on the contrary, they should remain steadfast on their stance. If these adversaries do not listen to him, they will only harm their own selves; no harm will come to the believers.

Verses (16-20): Sorrow is expressed on the Israelites: they were blessed with political authority, prophethood, abundant resources of sustenance as well as the leadership of other nations. However, they never fulfilled their obligations towards these favours; in fact, they created differences in the religion of God because of mutual jealousy and animosity. Muslims are directed that the Almighty has taken back the *sharī'ah* He had entrusted to the Jews and handed it over to them. They should guard themselves from going astray like the Jews and strongly adhere to the religion of God. They should not be overawed at this time by the alliance of the Jews and the idolaters. The help of God will nevertheless remain with those who fear Him.

Verses (21-37): Some objections raised by the rejecters of the Hereafter are dispelled. The state of affairs on that day of the deniers of the Hereafter is depicted. At the end, the subject of monotheism is once again taken up.

Section I: Verses (1-15)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ﴿۱﴾ تَنۡزِیۡلُ الۡکِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰہِ الۡعَزِیۡزِ الۡحَکِیۡمِ ﴿۲﴾ اِنَّ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّلۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ وَ فِیۡ خَلۡقِکُمۡ وَ مَا
یَبُثُّ مِنۡ دَآبَّۃٍ اٰیٰتٌ لِّقَوۡمٍ یُّوۡقِنُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾ وَ اخۡتِلَافِ الَّیۡلِ وَ النَّہَارِ وَ مَآ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰہُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنۡ رِّزۡقٍ فَاَحۡیَا بِہِ الۡاَرۡضَ
بَعۡدَ مَوۡتِہَا وَ تَصۡرِیۡفِ الرِّیٰحِ اٰیٰتٌ لِّقَوۡمٍ یَّعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ اللّٰہِ نَتۡلُوۡہَا عَلَیۡکَ بِالۡحَقِّ ۚ فَبِاَیِّ حَدِیۡثٍۭ بَعۡدَ اللّٰہِ وَ
اٰیٰتِہٖ یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۶﴾ وَیۡلٌ لِّکُلِّ اَفَّاکٍ اَثِیۡمٍ ﴿۷﴾ یَّسۡمَعُ اٰیٰتِ اللّٰہِ تُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡہِ ثُمَّ یُصِرُّ مُسۡتَکۡبِرًا کَاَنۡ لَّمۡ یَسۡمَعۡہَا ۚ فَبَشِّرۡہُ

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بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيۡمٌ ۝٨ وَاِذَا عَلِمَ مِنۡ اٰيٰتِنَا شَيۡـًٔا اتَّخَذَهَا هُزُوًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيۡنٌ ۝٩ مِنۡ وَّرَآئِهِمۡ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَلَا يُغۡنِىۡ
عَنۡهُمۡ مَّا كَسَبُوۡا شَيۡـًٔا وَّلَا مَا اتَّخَذُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ اَوۡلِيَآءَ ۚ وَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ عَظِيۡمٌ ۝١٠ هٰذَا هُدًى ۚ وَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ
رَبِّهِمۡ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ مِّنۡ رِّجۡزٍ اَلِيۡمٌ ۝١١ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىۡ سَخَّرَ لَـكُمُ الۡبَحۡرَ لِتَجۡرِىَ الۡفُلۡكُ فِيۡهِ بِاَمۡرِهٖ وَلِتَبۡتَغُوۡا مِنۡ فَضۡلِهٖ وَ
لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ ۝١٢ وَسَخَّرَ لَـكُمۡ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ جَمِيۡعًا مِّنۡهُ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوۡنَ ۝١٣
قُلۡ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا يَغۡفِرُوۡا لِلَّذِيۡنَ لَا يَرۡجُوۡنَ اَيَّامَ اللّٰهِ لِيَجۡزِىَ قَوۡمًا بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَكۡسِبُوۡنَ ۝١٤ مَنۡ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفۡسِهٖ ۚ
وَمَنۡ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَيۡهَا ۚ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمۡ تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ ۝١٥

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Ḥā Mīm. The elaborate revelation of this Book is from God, the Mighty, the Wise. There are many signs in the heavens and the earth for those who profess faith. And similarly, in your own creation, and in the beasts He has spread all around are many signs for those who want to have conviction. And in the alternation of night and day, in the means of sustenance God sends down from the sky with which He revives the earth after its death, and in the moving about of the winds also are signs for men who understand. (1-5)

These are God's revelations that We are reciting to you with absolute truth. So, after God and His signs what else will they believe in? Destruction is for every lying sinner who hears God's revelations recited to Him and then, as though he never heard them, persists in arrogance on his behaviour. So give them glad tidings of a painful torment. And when he comes to know of something from Our revelations, He makes fun of them. It is these people for whom there is a humiliating torment. Hell is in front of them and what they have earned will not be of the slightest benefit to them nor shall those they have served besides God. And for them will be a great punishment. This is the real guidance and those who have denied their Lord's revelations will face a painful scourge that will produce shivers. (6-11)

It is God alone Who has made the ocean harmonious for you so that ships may sail upon it at His bidding and so that you may be grateful to Him. And it is He Who has put in your service what is in the heavens and the earth; all from Him. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who reflect. (12-13)

Tell the believers to forgive those who do not expect the great days of God to manifest so that God fully reward a people according to their deeds. He who does a virtuous deed, it is for his own good; and he who commits evil does so at his own peril. Then to your Lord shall you be returned. (14-15)

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Explanation

حٰمٓ ۚ﴿۱﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿۲﴾[1]

The Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah* too is Ḥā Mīm. In the exegesis of previous *sūrahs*, I have already alluded to the commonality of topics of the *sūrahs* which have this name.

Like the introductory part of the previous *sūrah*, this *sūrah* too contains a reference to the exaltedness and significance of the Qur'ān. However, the nature of significance mentioned here is different from the one mentioned in the previous *sūrah*. I have explained in detail the word تَنْزِيْلُ at an appropriate place in this exegesis and shown that it contains the meaning of gradual progression and elaborate effort and I have explained at various places in this exegesis the nature of this elaborate effort and thoroughness of the Almighty in revealing the Qur'ān. Here, besides mentioning this elaborate arrangement, God has also referred to two of His attributes: al-'Azīz and al-Ḥakīm. The former means powerful and dominant and the latter refers to someone whose each and every word and deed has some wisdom. By mentioning together these two attributes here, two things are evident:

Firstly, the God Who has revealed this Qur'ān in such a thorough and elaborate manner is not weak, frail and helpless; in fact, He is the sovereign Lord and the dominion of this universe is in His hands. This Qur'ān is not a request; it is a royal decree of the real Master of this Universe Who must necessarily be obeyed. If it is not duly honoured, then people should remember that when He will seize them no one will be able to stop Him.

Secondly, besides being powerful, sovereign and dominant, God is also wise. This means that every word and deed of His is based on wisdom. The majesty of His wisdom is evident from His Book which is replete with wisdom – only if people care to reflect on it. A majestic feature of His wisdom is that even though some ingrates and worthless people are showing disregard to His Book and to His Messenger, He in spite of being powerful and prevailing is not showing haste in seizing them. On the contrary, He keeps on extending their respite so that those who have the ability can mend their ways and make themselves worthy of His mercy and those who have wasted their abilities are conclusively conveyed the truth; on the Day of Judgement, they will have no excuse to present.

اِنَّ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۳﴾[2]

This verse refers to the call and message of the Qur'ān regarding monotheism and to the arguments it contains that are spread all around man to substantiate the Day of

1. This is Ḥā Mīm. The elaborate revelation of this Book is from God, the Mighty, the Wise.
2. There are many signs in the heavens and the earth for those who profess faith.

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Judgement. It says that the signs of what the Qur'ān is calling people to and what it is warning them of are present in every nook and corner of this world. However, they are useful only for those who profess faith. Those who do not profess faith remain blind even after observing everything and keep demanding more signs. If a new sign is shown to them as per their demand, even then they are not convinced and start demanding another one. The real thing is a person's intent. If a person has a yearning for the truth and the will to reach his destination, the Creator of heavens and the earth has left no stone unturned in guiding him to this destination. The heavens have landmarks everywhere which point to it and the earth also provides guidance at every step. However, people who are lured away by their desires can neither see these signals sent out by the heavens nor the signs put forth by the earth. They keep wandering about all their lives.

وَفِيْ خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ اٰيٰتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ۝[3]

After directing attention to the composite signs of the heavens and the earth, attention is now drawn to the creation of man and to the tremendous system set up by God to nurture and sustain him. If a person reflects on all the phases of his creation, he will become aware of those facts about God's providence, power and wisdom which will leave no room for doubt in him about the oneness of God and about the Hereafter being possible and about reward and punishment being certain! How can it be difficult for the Creator Who has created man in such a grand mould from clay and a drop of water to recreate him? How can it be expected from the God Who for the purpose of nurturing man has made such elaborate arrangement from the first phase of his creation to the last that He will not hold man accountable. Why would not man – created with such great qualities – be held answerable for how he used these qualities? Moreover, what has come over man that he should associate partners with the God Who has put into his service the conflicting and opposing elements of nature.

The words وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ refer to the resources of providence which the Almighty has blessed man with in the form of beasts. If man reflects only a little, there is no doubt that the multifarious benefits he is receiving from these beasts are not merely chance happenings; in fact, God has created these beasts to provide these benefits to man and made each of their benefits very appropriate for him. If man was in need to transport himself and his belongings and things, God created animals which were appropriate for this purpose. If man needed milk, meat, wool and hides, God created different beasts to provide him with these needs. All this bears evidence that the Creator of this world is very merciful and it is essential that He be shown gratitude. What this elaborate arrangement of blessing man with favours further necessitates is that a day

3. And similarly, in your own creation, and in the beasts He has spread all around are many signs for those who want to have conviction.

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come wherein God ask him about these favours and those who fulfilled their rights be rewarded and those who forgot God after receiving them be punished for their ingratitude.

The verb يُّوْقِنُوْنَ in لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ is to express intention. In other words, the referred to phenomena contain numerous arguments in support of monotheism, the Hereafter and reward and punishment; however, mere existence of such arguments is not enough for them to be beneficial unless people have the intention to accept them. A person who does not want to be convinced invents one doubt or another against obvious realities.

وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ رِّزْقٍ فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَتَصْرِيْفِ الرِّيٰحِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ۝[4]

The word اِخْتِلَافٌ here means the consecutive alternation of day and night. At the same time, it subtly refers to the difference in the temperament of the night and the day which is essential for the existence, sustenance and well-being of this universe. The words مِنْ رِّزْقٍ refer to water which becomes a means for sustenance. In other words, here the effect connotes the cause. This usage is common not only in Arabic but in every language.

The argumentative aspect found in the alternation of day and night is referred to by the Qur'ān in many places: in spite of the fact that both are opposites to one another: one is dry and the other is warm; one is peaceful and the other is noisy; one is dark and the other is radiant; however, to nurture man both of them form a harmonious pair. This is a very clear evidence to the fact that both have been created by the same God and at His bidding are continuously carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to them with full vigilance. If they had been created by different gods, then harmony and accord between the two would have been impossible and in the absence of this harmony, life on this earth would have been impossible.

Similar is the situation with the rain. Though it comes down from the heavens, it gives life to the earth and its inhabitants. This bears clear testimony to the fact that a single intention prevails in the heavens and the earth. If the heavens had their own god and the earth its own, then why would the heavens rain down sustenance for the inhabitants of the earth? Moreover, every person without distinction observes that at times a piece of land is dry and desolate and there is not a single place in it in which any form of life can be seen when suddenly it springs to life after receiving rain. So will it be difficult for the God Whose majesties like these one witnesses in every season to recreate this world after it dies?

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4. And in the alternation of night and day, in the means of sustenance God sends down from the sky with which He revives the earth after its death, and in the moving about of the winds also are signs for men who understand.

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The words وَتَصۡرِيۡفِ الرِّيٰحِ point to the fact that in the movement of the winds also can be seen the signs of God's power, mercy, providence and punishment. It is quite evident that they are controlled by a single controller Who uses them as per His wisdom. If He stops them, the whole world will be destroyed in the blink of an eye. He can make them a boon for one people and a bane for another. It was because of this movement of the wind that God saved Moses (sws) and his people and destroyed the Pharaoh and his people. Every now and then, it comes to our notice that farmers are very satisfied by the future of their crops; yet suddenly blows a storm and darkens their future; sailors while opening the sails of their ships and farmers while carrying their equipment to clean the wheat crop wait for suitable winds but no one except God has the authority to send such winds. Although, in these times, man on the basis of scientific advancement has become audacious enough to claim that he has been able to control the clouds and the winds to a great extent; however, a little jolt from providence becomes enough to expose the extent of this control. All these things clearly bear witness that it is one single Being Who rules over all the elements of the universe. Without His permission, even a single leaf cannot move from its place.

The words اٰيٰتٌ لِّقَوۡمٍ يَّعۡقِلُوۡنَ imply that though the signs which bear witness to monotheism and the Hereafter are found at every step, only those will benefit from them who use their intellect. Those who don't use their intellect or use it to the extent of acquiring material benefits always remain deprived of the real majesty of these signs.

Here the Qur'ān has referred very briefly to these signs. For this reason, I too will confine myself to briefly alluding to them. All these signs have been explained in detail in previous *sūrahs* and I have full explained them there.

It is evident from the previous three verses that for the believers every nook and corner of this universe is replete with the signs of monotheism and the Hereafter. For the others too, these signs are not concealed on the condition that they have the courage to acknowledge and fully accept and the will to use their faculty of sense and reason. People who do not want to believe a reality however much evident it may be or do not use their faculty of sense and reason for the purpose it was given to them will never be cured of this blindness.

تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتۡلُوۡهَا عَلَيۡكَ بِالۡحَقِّ ۚ فَبِاَىِّ حَدِيۡثٍۢ بَعۡدَ اللّٰهِ وَاٰيٰتِهٖ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ۝٦[5]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and rebukes his adversaries. The antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun تِلۡكَ (these) is the signs found in the world around man and that within him referred to in the previous verses. The verse says that these are the signs of God's oneness, His power and wisdom and of the day

5. These are God's revelations that We are reciting to you with absolute truth. So after God and His signs what else will they believe in?

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of reward and punishment which God through the Qur'ān is reciting out to the Prophet (sws) with their full consequences and implications. So evident are these signs that no sensible person can deny them. The Qur'ān is only calling people to accept their real consequences and implications. If his adversaries are not willing to accept the obvious consequences of these signs, then what else can be more convincing and satisfying on which they will profess faith!

The word بِالْحَقِّ in نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ refers to the certain and factual consequences which one reaches after reflecting on these signs. As a qualifying word, it alludes to the fact that as far as reflection on these signs is concerned, others too reflect on them but they do so with their confined and limited angles. For this reason, they are either not able to reach out to the realities concealed in them or they do reach out to them but since they are against their whims and desires, they avoid accepting them. For example, astronomers also reflect on the signs found in the heavens and the earth and medical scientists do research on the anatomy of man and zoologists deliberate on various aspects of animal life and meteorologists study the movement of winds, seasons of rain and their effects and climatic changes. However, all of them, because of their narrow mindedness, can in fact see from their telescopes and microscopes a spot as minute as a needle point yet are unable to see the mountain of reality concealed by this point. The meteorologists will predict that in the next twenty four hours the weather will remain warm and dry and may also put forward absurd justifications for this. Many a time their predictions prove to be true and at times one cannot deny the justification put forth by them; however, their observation and analysis is confined to the nature of wind movement and its effects. They never bother to reflect beyond this to find out who the real Controller and Bringer about of changes is and what His rights are even though all the changes and transformations which occur in the universe are meant to take a person to the real question and find out its answer; moreover, if some fellow human being tells him a convincing answer to this question he should accept it. The Qur'ān has specially stressed those aspects of these signs which highlight the actual reality. Thus it has used the words: نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ.

A very important thing which becomes evident from this discussion is that the call and message of the Qur'ān is not based on forcing people to accept it; it is based on arguments found in the world within man and that around him as well as on the obvious norms of sense and human nature. The reason people who do accept these arguments is not that they are hidden from them; it is only because they find it against their base desires and thus want to evade them. People who are afflicted with this ailment obviously will not accept anything which is against their whims and desires even though it may be as radiant as the sun.

The second thing which becomes evident is that God and His signs are self-evident – in fact, the most self-evident of realities of this world. Those who reject them will never accept anything else; they are mere slaves of their desires and worship material things. If such people demand some new signs or miracles, then they are not worthy of being paid

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attention to. The greatest of miracles cannot open the eyes of such blind people!

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ اَفَّاكٍ اَثِيْمٍ ۙ﴿۷﴾ يَّسْمَعُ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ يُصِرُّ مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا ۚ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿۸﴾[6]

The rebuke sounded in the previous verse continues in these verses as well. Destruction awaits these people who have denied all these signs only to give credence to their sinful lives.

The word اَفَّاكٍ refers to a person who distorts facts; in other words, the signs of God refer to some other reality and he, while being a slave to his desires, completely changes and distorts it. The foremost people on whom this verse applies are the idolaters of the Quraysh who had distorted and disfigured the religion of Abraham (sws) because of blindly following their whims and desires! However, the verse generally applies to all those who in every period of time distort and change the directives of God because of their base whims and desires.

The word اَثِيْمٍ refers to a sinner, especially one who neither discharges his obligations nor fulfils the rights of others. The mention of this trait with the previous one shows that only those worthless people are guilty of conniving to distort facts who want to evade their rights and obligations towards God and want to insist on their sinful ways. The verse says that destruction awaits such wretched people. The reason is that the verses of God are being recited out to them but they very arrogantly walk away as if they heard nothing. This is a reference to the attitude the leaders of the Quraysh would adopt in response to the preaching of the Prophet (sws). In the very first place, they would regard going to the gatherings of the Prophet (sws) as something that would bring them shame. However, if they would go there at times or the Prophet (sws) would himself come to them to read out the Qur'ān to them, they would repulsively move away as if they had heard nothing!

The words تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ express the severity of their crime: if God's message has not reached someone and he remains unaware of it, then he may be afforded with a legitimate excuse; but what answer will the wretch give to God to whom the Prophet (sws) himself would go and vehemently deliver the message of God.

The words يُصِرُّ مُسْتَكْبِرًا point to the reason of their insistence on polytheism. The reason for this insistence is not because the reality is not evident to them. It was because they regarded it to be an insult to them that in spite of being chiefs and leaders they submit to someone inferior in status to them.

The words فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ are an explanation of the وَيْلٌ (destruction) mentioned in the previous verse: all such arrogant people should be given glad tidings of a painful doom. In other words, the Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that if because of conceit

6. Destruction is for every lying sinner who hears God's revelations recited to Him and then, as though he never heard them, persists in arrogance on his behaviour. So, give them glad tidings of a painful torment.

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they have shut their eyes to the glad tidings of salvation, then in any case the Prophet (sws) should sound them glad tidings of the doom such people necessarily meet.

وَاِذَا عَلِمَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا شَيْـًٔا اتَّخَذَهَا هُزُوًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ۝۹ [7]

The previous verse mentions the attitude the arrogant would adopt when the Prophet (sws) himself would try to read out the Qur'ān to them. This verse mentions the attitude they would adopt when they would hear a Qur'ānic verse or directive through someone else. It says that when God's verses come to their knowledge, they make fun of them so that others are not influenced by them. It needs to be kept in mind that at the time of revelation of the Qur'ān there existed people who would try to listen to the Qur'ān with an impartial mind and would also get influenced by it. These people would also try to bring its verses in the knowledge of their leaders in order to ask their opinion about them. Their leaders would immediately realize that they are getting influenced by it. To counter this effect they could not convince them through arguments by saying that such and such a verse of the Qur'ān is against sense and reason or against human nature or is factually incorrect. The only measure they could adopt was to make fun of the Qur'ān so that it is belittled and is not able to influence anyone. Though this despicable step would not produce the desired effect yet people having a weak personality would temporarily be deceived. This trick is adopted by all devils against the truth in every period of time.

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ express that since the real motive of their attitude is the arrogance pointed out in the previous verse, they will face a grievous punishment. They showed haughtiness before the truth. Hence they will face humiliation in the Hereafter. It needs to be kept in consideration that though refuge needs to be sought with God from all His torments; however, His greatest torment is one which is accompanied by humiliation. This torment is reserved specifically for the arrogant.

مِنْ وَّرَآىِٕهِمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَلَا يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَسَبُوْا شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا مَا اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَوْلِيَآءَ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ۝۱۰ [8]

The meaning of the word وَرَآء like the words "here" and "there" is determined by the context and occasion. It can mean both "the back" and "the front". The verse says that Hell is in front of them in which they will be flung. Once they enter it, neither will their illegally acquired treasures and riches which was the reason of their arrogance and evasion from the truth be of any avail to them nor will their alleged deities and intercessors which instead of God they regarded as their helpers be of any benefit to them.

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7. And when he comes to know of something from Our revelations, He makes fun of them. It is these people for whom there is a humiliating torment.

8. Hell is in front of them and what they have earned will not be of the slightest benefit to them nor shall those they have served besides God. And for them will be a great punishment.

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The words وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ express that this torment would not be easy to bear in any way; it would be a grievous one and its horrible nature cannot be imagined today.

هٰذَا هُدًى ۚ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّنْ رِّجْزٍ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١﴾[9]

This Qur'ān is a guidance revealed from God; it is no joke. Those who deny its verses or make fun of them should remember that they will face a painful torment. The words مِنْ رِّجْزٍ explain the nature of this torment. The word رِّجْزٍ refers to the torment which creates shivers. The implication is that it would not be any ordinary torment; it would be a painful one which will cause the hearts to shiver and tremble.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِىَ الْفُلْكُ فِيْهِ بِاَمْرِهٖ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا مِّنْهُ ۭ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾[10]

The previous four verses were interposed between the arguments cited in support of monotheism and the Hereafter so that the leaders of the Quraysh are warned forthwith and the Prophet (sws) is assured. From this verse, the actual line of discourse is taken up again. The verses say that it is God Who has put the sea in the service of man so that it allows him to cut across it in his ships. The word بِاَمْرِهٖ refers to the fact that this happens especially because of God's directive. Had God not directed so, a ship would have drowned in the sea the way smaller objects are drowned when they enter it; on the other hand, a ship weighing thousands of tons sails on it. It is a God-made law that a small piece of iron drowns in the sea but a ship laden with thousands of tons of iron does not drown in it. It is evident from contextual indications that a word like لِتَرْكَبُوْا (so that you embark [on it]) or لِتُسَافِرُوْا (so that you travel [on it]) is suppressed before وَ لِتَبْتَغُوْا. The particle of conjunction وَ is an evidence to this suppression. The implication is that God has made this elaborate arrangement so that man can travel from one place to another and through trade strive to earn the blessings of God.

The words وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ point to the real message which should be received by every person – having even a little life in his conscience and intellect – observes in the various manifestations of God's providence. The Almighty has shown these majesties to man so that he can show gratitude to Him. It should be kept in mind that it is this feeling of gratitude which is the foundation of worshipping God. I have explained this fact in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah.

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9. This is the real guidance and those who have denied their Lord's revelations will face a painful scourge that will produce shivers.

10. It is God alone Who has made the ocean harmonious for you so that ships may sail upon it at His bidding and so that you may be grateful to Him. And it is He Who has put in your service what is in the heavens and the earth; all from Him. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who reflect.

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Consider next, the part: وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ. Before this part, how the seas had been put to the service of man has been alluded to because the sea is the most powerful of things that comes in the observation of man and which is apparently uncontrollable and most people have experienced sea travel also. After this specific mention, a reference is made to the general things of this world: the same God has put all other things of the heavens and the earth in the service of man.

The expression جَمِيْعًا مِّنْهُ refers to the fact that all these things are directly or indirectly serving man. The word جَمِيْعًا does not relate to the previous words; it relates to مِّنْهُ. In other words, none of these things were harnessed by man nor by any other being nor are these things serving man of their own accord; all these, in fact, have been harnessed by God because He alone is their Creator and He alone controls them.

The words اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ express the fact that for people who deliberate there exist multifarious arguments in the world around them in favour of monotheism and the Hereafter.

– the fact that the elements of nature have been harnessed for man shows that none of these elements can occupy the status of God and be worshipped; every one of them by its very existence bears testimony to the fact that it is subservient to a superior authority who is using them through His will and wisdom.

– in spite of the fact that these elements are conflicting and opposing to one another they are harmonious with one another the way the parts of a machine are. This congruence between them shows that a single will prevails in this universe.

– this system contains such signs of providence, mercy and wisdom as forms an unassailable evidence to refute the fact that an uncontrollable and unrestrained force is running the affairs of this universe. His knowledge, mercy and wisdom necessitate that He also bring about a day in which He reward those who fulfilled their obligations towards His favours and punish those who did not duly value these favours and got involved in disbelief and polytheism. If He does not bring about such a day, then it would either mean that God forbid He is totally powerless or insensitive or merely wants to entertain Himself. All these conclusions are against His noble attributes.

The word يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ at the end depicts the fact that as far as arguments are concerned, they are numerous. Every nook and corner of the universe is replete with them, and the Qur'ān has also fully explained them. The only thing that is lacking is reflection and deliberation. People do not reflect on the signs of God. This deliberation is something on which God does not force them; it is up to them to undertake it.

قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يَغْفِرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ اَيَّامَ اللّٰهِ لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْمًا بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾[11]

The word يَغْفِرُوْا here means to forgive and ignore someone.

11. Tell the believers to forgive those who do not expect the great days of God to manifest so that God fully reward a people according to their deeds.

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The expression اَيَّامَ اللّٰهِ refers to the historic days of God's revenge and retribution in which He wiped out the rejecters of His messengers from the face of the earth. The history of past nations mentioned in the Qur'ān refers to these days and the succeeding verses also mention them. The word قَوْمٌ in لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْمًا refers to the enemies which are under discussion from the previous verses. It has been used as an indefinite noun to express hate and abhorrence. This usage is similar to that of the indefinite noun قُلُوْبٌ in (٢٤:٤٧) اَمْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبٍ اَقْفَالُهَا. People who have interpreted it to refer to Muslims have failed to reflect on the context of the discourse and its eloquence of style.

Just as in verse 6, the Prophet (sws) was sounded assurance on the stubbornness of his opponents, in a similar manner, the believers are assured here: they should not get dejected at the evil-doing of the evil-doers; in fact, they should ignore them for now. Since they do not fear that the horrible day they are being warned of will in fact manifest itself, they have become audacious. However, God is giving respite to such detestable people so that they are left with no excuse and then He will duly punish them. It is the practice of God to give full respite to the mischievous so that the truth is conclusively conveyed to them, and when they are seized by Him, they are left with no excuse.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۡ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾[12]

This verse further elucidates the assurance sounded earlier: if these people adopt the path of virtue, they themselves will be rewarded for it and if they adhere to vice, then they alone will suffer its evil consequences. The believers will in no way be responsible for this since they had done their job of conveying the truth. Then everyone will come in the presence of God on the Day of Judgement. It will then be decided as to who is right and who is wrong and what fate each deserves.

Section II: Verses (16-23)

The succeeding verses discuss the attitude the Jews had adopted in their enmity with Islam to support the idolaters. As is indicated earlier, in this period they had started to openly back them. Since the Jews were regarded as a religious group, their support had greatly encouraged the idolaters. These circumstances entailed that they be exposed so that fear does not arise among the Muslims because of their opposition, and the Idolaters are also informed that people on whose encouragement they feel very proud are actually even greater criminals in the eyes of God; if the Idolaters listen to their advice, then ultimately both will reach the same fate. In this regard, the

12. He who does a virtuous deed, it is for his own good; and he who commits evil does so at his own peril. Then to your Lord shall you be returned.

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Prophet (sws) is urged to adhere to his stance with full perseverance; he is told that he is now the bearer of the last *sharī'ah* of God and he should neither care about the Jews nor the idolaters; only he and his companions enjoy the help of God and this help is sufficient!

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَفَضَّلْنٰهُمْ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ
بَيِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ ۚ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ ۙ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِيْ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا
كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلٰي شَرِيْعَةٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ اِنَّهُمْ لَنْ
يُّغْنُوْا عَنْكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـــًٔا ۭ وَاِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَاۗءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ هٰذَا بَصَاۗىِٕرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى
وَّ رَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ اَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِيْنَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ اَنْ نَّجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ۙ سَوَاۗءً
مَّحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ ۭ سَاۗءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَخَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلِتُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا
يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰـهَهٗ هَوٰىهُ وَاَضَلَّهُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي عِلْمٍ وَّخَتَمَ عَلٰي سَمْعِهٖ وَقَلْبِهٖ وَجَعَلَ عَلٰي بَصَرِهٖ غِشٰوَةً ۭ
فَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اللّٰهِ ۭ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾

And indeed We gave the Book to the Israelites and bestowed on them authority and prophethood and provided them with wholesome sustenance and exalted them above the people of the world. And We gave them clear injunctions of God's *sharī'ah*; and they only differed after being granted knowledge because of mutual stubbornness. Indeed, their Lord will decide between them on the Day of Judgement in all matters they had differed. Then We set you on a clear *sharī'ah* from God. So, follow it only and do not follow the desires of those who have no knowledge. These people will be of no benefit to you against God and these who wrong their souls help one another, and God is the helper of those who fear Him. (16-19)

This is a collection of verses which engenders vision in people and a guidance and mercy for those who have conviction. Do those who have committed sins think that We will equate them with those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds; their life and death shall be the same? What an evil judgement they are passing. And God has created the heavens and the earth with a purpose and so that each soul be recompensed according to what it did and they shall not be wronged. (20-22)

Have you seen him who makes his lust his god and he whom God led astray even though he had knowledge and set a seal upon his ears and heart and drew a veil over his eyes? Who can guide such people after God has led them astray? Will you people not take heed? (23)

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Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَفَضَّلْنٰهُمْ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۚ﴿۱۶﴾[13]

This is a reference to the great favours done by the Almighty to the Israelites. The purpose of referring to them, as I have indicated earlier and as will become evident from subsequent verses, is to highlight the fact that the Almighty had done great favours to them, but they turned out to be such wretches that they did not value any of these favours. The stage reached when they were stripped of God's gifts and blessings and wanted to see others in this same state.

The word الْكِتٰبَ obviously refers to the Torah.

Contextual indications show that the word حُكْم refers to the kingdom which was acquired by the Israelites in the times of David (sws) and Solomon (sws) and which continued to exist for a long period. The relationship between the Book and political authority is that one necessitates the other. The Book of God is a collection of all His directives and laws; for this reason, the nation to whom God bestows His scripture of law and injunctions is necessarily bestowed with political authority by Him because this is necessary for the implementation of the laws. Such nations are deprived of political authority when they show indifference to the directives of God.

The meaning of the word النُّبُوَّةَ is very evident. However, here it is mentioned for a specific purpose: after Moses (sws), a whole series of prophets were consecutively sent among the Israelites with Jesus (sws) being the last in line. The Israelites were condemned for the attitude they adopted with Jesus (sws) and then were deprived forever of both political power and prophethood.

The words وَرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ refer to the abundance in sustenance, means of livelihood as well as the favours and affluence given to the Israelites. This began with their occupation of the land of Palestine and reached its climax in the time of Solomon (sws).

The superiority mentioned in وَفَضَّلْنٰهُمْ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ is an essential outcome of a nation being blessed with a divine Book. This Book is the light of guidance for the masses. When the Almighty hands over this light to a nation, then this means that He has chosen that nation to guide His creation. Indeed, this superiority is huge. However, at the same time, this superiority is dependent on certain conditions. As long as a nation continues to discharge this obligation of guiding people, it is blessed with this superiority. When it forgoes this obligation, it is deprived of this superiority.

وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ بَيِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ ۚ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ ۢ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِيْ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ

13. And indeed We gave the Book to the Israelites and bestowed on them authority and prophethood and provided them with wholesome sustenance and exalted them above the people of the world.

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فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾[14]

The word اَمْرٌ here refers to *sharī'ah* and religion. The verse says that God further blessed them with directives of the *sharī'ah* in a clear, certain and unequivocal manner so that there is no possibility that they differ with one another or try to escape from these directives. However, in spite of this elaborate arrangement, they differed with one another and this difference did not arise because there was a genuine reason for it. On the contrary, in spite of the presence of divine revelations, this difference arose in obduracy and malice for one another. The result was that they were finally deprived of the light of God. Now He will decide about their degree of veracity on the Day of Judgement and will also assess on that Day how much role did stubbornness, obstinacy, partisanship and the desire to defeat the opponent play.

Here the purpose to refer to this aspect of their character is two fold. On the one hand, it is to assure the Muslims that today people who have assumed the position of arbitrators and want to decide whether the Quraysh are on the right or the Muslims have themselves been deprived of God's religion because of mutual differences as well as mutual animosity and jealousy. If such wretched people show jealousy to the Muslims and start opposing them, then this should be no matter of amazement!

On the other hand, it is to warn the Quraysh that they should not expect people who have are afflicted with self-inflicted blindness to show them the way. They will only want that just as they themselves are wandering in darkness by blowing out the light provided by God, in a similar manner, the Quraysh too are deprived of it and wander about in the same darkness.

A very important thing that becomes evident from this verse is that if there exists a difference of opinion in understanding a precept of religion, then this is neither a matter of amazement nor is it harmful for religion and its bearers. People of knowledge have differed with one another and can differ with one another. However, if the basis of this difference is mutual rivalry and jealousy and the desire to harm and defeat one another, then this attitude indeed razes down the whole edifice of religion. It was this type of difference which deprived the People of the Book from the light of God and it is this type of difference which has doomed the Muslims as well.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلٰى شَرِيْعَةٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾[15]

The word شَرِيْعَة means "a clear path and a distinct method." The expression مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ is used in this verse in the same meaning as the previous one. When these People of the

14. And We gave them clear injunctions of God's *sharī'ah*; and they only differed after being granted knowledge because of mutual stubbornness. Indeed, their Lord will decide between them on the Day of Judgement in all matters they had differed.

15. Then We set you on a clear *sharī'ah* from God. So, follow it only and do not follow the desires of those who have no knowledge.

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Book lost the straight path which God had informed them of and no one remained to guide the creation, at that time the Almighty sent the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) with a clear *sharī'ah*. The implication is that if today these Israelites are spreading the malicious campaign against the preaching mission of the Prophet (sws) that what was the need of a new Book and *sharī'ah* in their presence and in the presence of their *sharī'ah*, the reason for this is that they are not observing the mischief they have worked. Had they keenly observed it, they would have known the requirements of both religion and people which necessitated the Prophet's advent. This topic has already been discussed in verse 45 of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm al-Sajdah.

Consider next the portion: **فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَ لَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ.** The word اَهْوَآءَ (literally: desires), as has been numerously explained in this exegesis, refers to religious innovations. Since these innovations are invented to lend religious credence to ones desires, they are called اَهْوَآءَ so that their source is unfolded. Their origin is not religion or intellect; it is base whims and desires.

These words emphasize on the Prophet (sws) to follow the clear *sharī'ah* given to him by the Almighty after it had been cleansed from all religious innovations and deviances and to not follow the religious innovations of those who know not which include the Jews and the Christians. The idolaters of Arabia were obviously not conversant with divine scriptures or the *sharī'ah*. They did claim that they were the inheritors of Abraham's religion; however, all they inherited was the innovations which their ignorant forefathers had fabricated in the name of Abraham's religion. It is while supporting such innovations that they would fight with the Prophet (sws) alleging that his message was obliterating their ancestral religion. Though the Jews and Christians claimed to be the bearers of the Book of God, but, as is mentioned earlier, they had created so many differences in the religion of God that its pristine teachings had been lost. When the Qur'ān highlighted these real teachings negating their religious innovations (اَهْوَآءَ), they too got very angry. They contended that this new religion had endangered their beliefs which they laid claim to fool their masses. The fact was that the message of the Qur'ān had not only revived in its true form the religion of the prophets but also completed it. However, since the Jews and Christians were totally in the dark with regard to the real religion, so instead of siding with the Prophet (sws), they sided with the Quraysh and embarked upon wiping out Islam.

The Qur'ān has emphasized on the Prophet (sws) that it is he who is following the *sharī'ah* of God; so however much should his opponents oppose him, he should continue to adhere to it, and should certainly not follow the religious innovations of those who are unaware of the real religion of God.

This was not, God forbid, emphasized on the Prophet (sws) because of any possibility that he would be inclined to their religious innovations; this style was adopted to indirectly express abhorrence for them. The Almighty did not even like addressing such people directly. He deemed it appropriate to address his Prophet (sws) and tell him to abstain from their religious innovations. This style of address is

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adopted at numerous places in the Qur'ān.

اِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يُّغْنُوْا عَنْكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَ اللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾[16]

However hard these people should try, the Prophet (sws) should not care about them. They will be of no avail to him before God. He alone and not they who will be asked of the responsibility imposed on him by God. Thus he should obey the directives of God. Whether these people try to stop him through their opposition or to soften him by showing sympathy, he should totally ignore them.

The word الظّٰلِمِيْنَ in وَ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَ اللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ refers to both the People of the Book and the idolaters because both were guilty of being unjust to their souls viz a viz the religion of God. The verse states that these wrongdoers have indeed joined hands in opposing the Qur'ān; however, the Prophet (sws) should not the slightest fear this alliance. God is at the support and backing of those who fear Him (ie the Muslims). The implication is that when God is their helper, why should they fear anyone? They should continue with their ways; God will ease out all their hardships. And who can conquer those who are helped by the might of God?

هٰذَا بَصَآئِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَ هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾[17]

This is a reference to the Qur'ān to oppose which the People of the Book and the idolaters had joined hands. It has also been referred to in verse eleven. The demonstrative pronoun هٰذَا refers to the Qur'ān in the collective sense and the word بَصَآئِرُ has been used keeping in consideration the verses of the Qur'ān which the disbelievers were making fun of. The verse states that this Qur'ān is a collection of verses which provide vision and insight. If people are making fun of it and oppose it, then they are only fooling their own selves. It is evident from the style of this verse that as far as the ability of the Qur'ān to give insight and vision is concerned, like the sun it can be benefited from by everyone. The Almighty has revealed it for this very purpose; however, only they will avail this blessing who open their eyes to benefit from its radiance.

After delineating the general benefit, the words وَ هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ point to the specific benefit of the Qur'ān: it is guidance and mercy for those who have conviction in the warnings and glad tidings sounded by it. I have explained elsewhere that wherever the words هُدًى (guidance) and رَحْمَةٌ (mercy) have been used in this context, both have a different meaning viz. for those who have conviction, this Qur'ān is a guidance in this world and mercy in the Hereafter; in this world, it will guide them to

16. These people will be of no benefit to you against God and these who wrong their souls help one another, and God is the helper of those who fear Him.

17. This is a collection of verses which engenders vision in people and a guidance and mercy for those who have conviction.

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the straight path and in the Hereafter it will unlock the doors of God's immeasurable mercy.

اَمۡ حَسِبَ الَّذِيۡنَ اجۡتَرَحُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ اَنۡ نَّجۡعَلَهُمۡ كَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ۙ سَوَآءً مَّحۡيَاهُمۡ وَمَمَاتُهُمۡ ؕ سَآءَ مَا يَحۡكُمُوۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾[18]

The verse signifies that people who are making fun of the warnings and glad tidings sounded by the Qur'ān are rather of the view that the believers and disbelievers are equal in the sight of God; the life and death of both is the same. The verse says that if this is their view, then this is a very bad judgment that they are passing. In other words, it is absolutely against the awareness of the justice divinely ordained in human nature. Whether a person leads a virtuous life or a sinful one, in his heart he always respects virtue and virtuous people. A person who views matters in an unbiased manner will never like that the virtuous and the sinful be treated equally. In all laws legislated by man in various periods of time, this principle of justice has always basically remained in consideration. So how can the principle of justice so universally acknowledged by human beings be regarded as devoid in the Almighty? If the virtuous and the sinful are equal in His eyes, then this would necessitate that either He is oppressive and unjust or is absolutely insensitive towards virtue and vice. Of course such concepts cannot even be imagined for God. If He is fair and just, then it is necessary that He bring about a day in which He administers impartial justice between people on that Day. He should then fully reward those who led a just and virtuous life and fully punish those who led a life of disobedience and defiance. The advent of such a day is also necessary because this world is governed on the basis trials and tests. Here both the righteous and the evil-doers have been given the opportunity to lead a life of virtue or of vice; the Almighty will not necessarily punish those who lead the life of vice here or reward those who lead a virtuous one. The Almighty has appointed a special day for this reward and punishment. The Qur'ān has been revealed to inform people of the punishment which will be meted out on that day and to inform and give glad tidings of the reward that will given be to people on that day. It is as if people who are making fun of these warnings and glad tidings are of the view that the Creator of this universe has created it for His own entertainment and sport and has no concern for its good and evil.

وَخَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ بِالۡحَقِّ وَلِتُجۡزٰى كُلُّ نَفۡسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتۡ وَهُمۡ لَا يُظۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾[19]

The verse implies that while these naïve people think what is stated in the previous

18. Do those who have committed sins think that We will equate them with those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds; their life and death shall be the same? What an evil judgement they are passing.

19. And God has created the heavens and the earth with a purpose and so that each soul be recompensed according to what it did and they shall not be wronged.

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verse, the fact is that the Almighty has created the heavens and the earth for a purpose. It is the requirement of this purpose that a day come wherein the Almighty decide between people and each person be rewarded or punished with full justice in accordance with his deeds. If such a day does not come and this world continues to exist for a time and then ends without any day of reward or punishment, then this would mean that it is without a purpose; it is a useless and baseless place and a playground of amusement for its Creator who is interested in sport and has created it for His merrymaking; He has fashioned this enormous creation without any purpose.

In my opinion, words to the effect لِيَفْصِلَ بَيْنَهُمْ (that He may decide between them) are suppressed after بِالْحَقِّ. The part وَلِتُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ is co-ordinated to these suppressed words.

The qualifying clause وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ points to the fact that it is essential that on that day impartial justice be meted out to every soul and it should not be wronged in any manner. If a person is wronged in any manner or treated unjustly, then this would mean that this world is a totally meaningless and purposeless creation. This qualifying clause also refutes the baseless concepts of polytheism and intercession with which both the idolaters and the People of the Book were afflicted. In the presence of these concepts, believing in the Hereafter or disbelieving in it is the same. How can impartial and unbiased justice be imagined when it is believed that whatever the deeds of a person, the deities and partners he imputes to God will earn him salvation through their intercession and influence. In this case, the door to injustice and oppression would stand opened.

اَفَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰـهَهٗ هَوٰىهُ وَاَضَلَّهُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ وَّخَتَمَ عَلٰى سَمْعِهٖ وَقَلْبِهٖ وَجَعَلَ عَلٰى بَصَرِهٖ غِشٰوَةً ؕ فَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾[20]

In the previous verse, the erroneous concept about the life of the idolaters was censured. In this verse, an assurance is sounded to the Muslims about the Jews who are supporting the Idolaters in spite of being claimants to the Book of God; this is because the Almighty has set a seal on their ears and hearts and covered their eyes with a veil as a punishment for their misdeeds. So who can guide people who have been seized by the law of God.

The word اَفَرَءَيْتَ is used to express amazement or sorrow at the situation of a person. It is like saying: "Look at him …," or "Have you seen such and such a person?" In this verse, attention is directed with wonder at the circumstances of the Jews because God made them the recipients of His Book and *sharī'ah*; but they totally ignored it and worshipped their whims and desires. When a person becomes such a slave to his

20. Have you seen him who makes his lust his god and he whom God led astray even though he had knowledge and set a seal upon his ears and heart and drew a veil over his eyes? Who can guide such people after God has led them astray? Will you people not take heed?

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desires that he does not even care about explicit divine directives and regards following his desires to be beneficial for himself, then such a person is not a slave of God; he is the slave of his desires and religious innovations. This desire-worship trait of the Jews has been mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The words وَاَضَلَّهُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰی عِلۡمٍ imply that the real deprivation of these people is not that they were without the radiance of faith; their misfortune is that instead of giving due importance to the knowledge given to them by God, they only followed their desires and religious innovations. The punishment of this love of theirs to go astray was that God let them wander astray. In verse 17 earlier, it was said: وَاٰتَيۡنٰهُمۡ بَيِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ الۡاَمۡرِ ۚ فَمَا اخۡتَلَفُوۡۤا اِلَّا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الۡعِلۡمُ ۢ بَغۡيًۢا بَيۡنَهُمۡ (and We gave them clear injunctions of God's *sharī'ah*; and they only differed after being granted knowledge because of mutual stubbornness). What is said in this verse by the words مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الۡعِلۡمُ is the same as expressed by the words عَلٰی عِلۡمٍ in the verse under discussion. In other words, these people have been let to wander in darkness after they had been blessed with light; so Muslims should not expect anything good from them.

Consider next the portion: وَ خَتَمَ عَلٰی سَمۡعِهٖ وَ قَلۡبِهٖ وَ جَعَلَ عَلٰی بَصَرِهٖ غِشٰوَةً. What is said here has also been discussed in verse 7 of Sūrah al-Baqarah about these very Jews; there I have explained in detail the nature of God setting seal on the hearts of people. The Qur'ān only mentions the Jews by this attribute.

There is a governing noun (*muḍāf*) suppressed after مِن in فَمَنۡ يَّهۡدِيۡهِ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ. ie. اَنۡ اَضَلَّهُ اللّٰهُ مِن بَعۡدِ. The implication is that who can guide people on whose hearts a seal has been set as per the established practice of God. I have explained at many places in this exegesis the practice of God about guiding people and leading them astray. Readers may look up the discussion of sealing of hearts by God in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The words اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ counsel – in fact – warn Muslims: why are they amazed that these literate claimants to the Book and religion of God have become the enemies of the Qur'ān and friends of the idolaters. Muslims should remember that God guides only those who duly value His guidance. Those who do not do so are caught in the noose of this very guidance. I have explained this in the following verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah: (٢:٢٦) يُضِلُّ بِهٖ كَثِيۡرًا ۙ وَّ يَهۡدِىۡ بِهٖ كَثِيۡرًا (through it, He guides many and leads astray many, (2:26)).

Section III: Verses (23-37)

In the succeeding verses, a comment is made on an absurd demand of the rejecters of the Day of Judgement: when they were warned of it, they would say that if it is to come, then the Prophet (sws) should raise their forefathers back to life! While refuting this demand, the fate of these rejecters is portrayed which they will necessarily encounter in the Hereafter. At the same time, it is delineated that on the day they will

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meet this fate, no deity or intercessor will be able to save them from the punishment of God. On that day, the supreme triumph will be achieved only by those who profess faith in the Hereafter and in monotheism and instead of relying on polytheism and intercession rely on what they can earn through pious deeds.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَقَالُوْا مَا هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوْتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَآ اِلَّا الدَّهْرُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَظُنُّوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوا ائْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُحْيِيْكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ يَّخْسَرُ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَتَرٰى كُلَّ اُمَّةٍ جَاثِيَةً ۭ كُلُّ اُمَّةٍ تُدْعٰٓى اِلٰى كِتٰبِهَا ۭ اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ هٰذَا كِتٰبُنَا يَنْطِقُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ اِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنْسِخُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَيُدْخِلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۭ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۣ اَفَلَمْ تَكُنْ اٰيٰتِيْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّالسَّاعَةُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا قُلْتُمْ مَّا نَدْرِيْ مَا السَّاعَةُ ۙ اِنْ نَّظُنُّ اِلَّا ظَنًّا وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِمُسْتَيْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَقِيْلَ الْيَوْمَ نَنْسٰىكُمْ كَمَا نَسِيْتُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا وَمَاْوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ ذٰلِكُمْ بِاَنَّكُمُ اتَّخَذْتُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ هُزُوًا وَّغَرَّتْكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُوْنَ مِنْهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَرَبِّ الْاَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَهُ الْكِبْرِيَآءُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٣٧﴾

And they say: "Our life is only the life of this world. We die and live here and nothing but the fortunes of time destroy us." And they have no knowledge of this. They are merely speculating. And when Our clear verses are recited to them, their only argument is: "If you are true in your claim, bring back to us our fathers!" Tell them: "It is God who gives you life and then gives you death. It is He who will then gather you till the Day of Resurrection in which there is no doubt; yet most men do not know this fact." (24-26)

And to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. And on the day when the Hour comes, the wrongdoers will be the losers. And you shall see each community on its knees. Each community shall be summoned to its record of deeds. They will be told: "You shall this day be rewarded for your deeds. This is Our record which will bear true witness over you. We have been recording whatever you have been doing." (27-29)

As for those who embraced faith and did good deeds, their Lord will admit them into His mercy. This is, in fact, a clear triumph. As for those who disbelieved, they will be

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told: "Were not My verses recited out before you; so you showed arrogance and you were a criminal people; and when you were told: 'God's promise is true and the Hour of Doom is sure to come,' you would reply: 'We know nothing of the Hour of Doom; it is only conjecture; nor are we convinced.'" (30-32)

And the evil of their deeds they did will manifest itself to them, and what they would make fun of will encompass them. And it will be said to them: "Today we will disregard you the way you remained oblivious of the meeting of this day of yours and Hell is your abode and none will be your helper. This is because you made fun of God's verses and were led away by the worldly life." Thus, today neither shall they be taken out from it nor shall they be given the opportunity to present an apology. Thus, God alone is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Lord of the worlds, worthy of being praised and to Him belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and He is Mighty and Wise. (33-37)

Explanation

وَقَالُوْا مَا هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوْتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَآ اِلَّا الدَّهْرُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَظُنُّوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾[21]

Mentioned in verses 21 and 22 earlier were the arguments relating to morals and morality as well as the ones found within man and outside him in support of the Day of Judgement. Here an objection on these arguments raised by the rejecters of the Day of Judgement is referred to: when they are reminded of it, they very arrogantly say that their existence is confined to this worldly life only; after this life, there is no life or death; people who threaten them with life after death and accountability of their deeds are merely bluffing and are inflicted with a baseless notion.

The words نَمُوْتُ وَنَحْيَا express their view that their life and death is confined to this world. After dying everything will come to an end.

The words وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَآ اِلَّا الدَّهْرُ continue to state their stance. They are of the opinion that it is absolutely wrong that God gives them death and that He is gathering them one day to hold them accountable for their deeds and then reward and punish them; they contend that it is in fact the fortunes of time which destroys them and not God; just as a tree sprouts and reaches its culmination and then becomes dry to whither away, similarly, they too are born; then because of vagaries of time either die in their childhood or youth or do so in old age.

The part وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَظُنُّوْنَ is a comment of God on their nonsensical talk: whatever they say is not based on knowledge; it is mere speculation and conjecture; they do not want to believe in the Hereafter because this would curtail their freedom and stall their luxurious life-style. For this reason, they utter such absurd words without

21. And they say: "Our life is only the life of this world. We die and live here and nothing but the fortunes of time destroy us." And they have no knowledge of this. They are merely speculating.

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even thinking what they are saying. They are thereby denying a reality to which their very nature and the whole system of this world bear witness to. The Hereafter is a consequence of God's power, wisdom, mercy, providence and justice. If it does not come into being, then this world becomes merely a place of sport and amusement.

Some people have deduced from this verse that there was a group of atheists in Arabia which denied God and the Hereafter. In my view, this is not correct. Whether there were a few such individuals or not is another thing; however, as a group, there was not a single person in those times who explicitly denied God and the Hereafter or was a pure materialist. The Arabs were not those who denied these realities; they were polytheists and because of this polytheism, they had made God totally ineffectual in the system of this world; they also did not absolutely deny the Hereafter and the life therein; they were hesitant and uncertain about them. They reckoned that being raised to life again after death was in the first place very improbable and if this would ever take place, they would have to deal with their own deities and not God; these deities would procure high ranks for them and if God would intend to punish them, these deities would save them from Him because of their power and influence.

Their statement that the fortunes of time destroy them does not insinuate God's denial; by these words, they only wanted to refute the philosophy of history which the Qur'ān recounted with great detail before the Quraysh that the earlier peoples were destroyed because of their erroneous beliefs, misdeeds and rejection of the Messengers of God; if they too follow in their steps, their fate will be the same as well. Since this warning was based on certain facts, people who were far-sighted to some extent were influenced by it. They feared this warning to be true and that if they too deny the true call like the 'Ād, the Thamūd, the people of Madyan and the Pharaoh and not reform their beliefs and deeds, they too might be tormented by the punishment the Qur'ān is threatening them with. In order to appease such people, the Quraysh fabricated the philosophy that it is absolutely wrong to think that the previous peoples were destroyed because of erroneous beliefs, misdeeds and rejection of the Messengers of God; what relation has God to such things; people are only destroyed because of the fortunes of time; a person is born, he grows up, reaches old age and then dies and his beliefs and deeds have no relationship with his death; his death is only a result of the vagaries of time; on similar lines, nations are born, progress and develop, create cultures and civilizations, vanquish lands and then die away because of the fortunes of time; a drama is continuously being enacted on the stage of this world and will continue to go on; it is nothing but the product of fortunes of time; people who relate this to belief and deeds are merely superstitious and want to afflict others with a superstition as well.

The words وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَظُنُّوْنَ express the fact that these people would say this with arrogance and authority without having any knowledge in this matter; it is mere speculation on which they have built the edifice of this philosophy. The teaching of human intellect and nature, of the world inside man and that outside him as well of

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prophets and sages is the same as what the Qur'ān is presenting; however, these people instead of knowledge want to follow conjectures because only conjecture and not knowledge can provide sanction to all their desires. This style of discourse expresses great yearning and sorrow: very unfortunate are these people who have made their thoughts and conjectures to be their guides in such a great matter.

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوا ائْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾[22]

This verse explains the conjecture of these people which they made as their guide to counter the clear arguments of the Qur'ān: when they are recited out explicit verses of the Qur'ān relating to the Hereafter, the only argument they have to negate it is their demand from the Prophet (sws) and his companions that if they are true in this claim, then they should bring back to life the deceased ancestors of these people.

The word حُجَّتَهُمْ is the enunciative (*khabar*) of كَانَ. This subject is discussed in Sūrah al-'Ankabūt in slightly different words: فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوا ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ. (٢٩:٢٩) (the only answer of their nation would be: "if you are truthful in your claim bring to us the torment of God, (29:29)). By the word حُجَّت is meant their answer. Out of arrogance they would regard it to be a conclusive argument; for this reason, the Qur'ān has sarcastically called it حُجَّت. The objective is to show that in such a big issue, they have fallen back on an answer which has neither any near or distant relationship with the real discussion nor has it got anything to do with reason and logic; it is only a baseless notion of theirs; they are under the wrong impression that they have been able to save themselves from what the Qur'ān is warning them of.

قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُحْيِيْكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾[23]

In this verse, they are reminded of the real claim through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). The style adopted is such that the argument in favour of the claim is made evident by its own self. The verse says that they are not being told that whoever they pinpoint today can be brought back to life; what they are being told is that it is God alone Who gives them life and He alone Who gives them death; then He will gather them and this gathering together will continue till the Day of Judgement and there is no doubt about the arrival of that Day.

In other words, when life and death are in the hands of God and this is a fact that cannot be denied, then the question whether He can recreate after giving death is needless. Why cannot He who has given life give life again? When He alone has

22. And when Our clear verses are recited to them, their only argument is: "If you are true in your claim, bring back to us our fathers!"

23. Tell them: "It is God who gives you life and then gives you death. It is He who will then gather you till the Day of Resurrection in which there is no doubt; yet most men do not know this fact."

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given death to whom He has given life and if He wants to give another life to whom He has created, then who can stop Him in this? This could only have been possible if someone had the ability to give life and some other to give death. Inalienable proofs show that this universe is devoid of this duality. Its very existence bears witness that only one intention prevails in it.

The words ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ mention the essential requirement of life and death: if after these, a day of accountability does not come, then the whole universe becomes a meaningless and purposeless creation. Hence it is essential that God gather everyone one day and this gathering together continue till the Day of Judgement whose advent is essential to make this life and death to be purposeful and about whose advent there is no doubt.

The preposition اِلٰى after يَجْمَعُكُمْ expresses continuity and proximity; ie. this gathering together will continue till the Day of Judgement. It is evident from this that before the Day of Judgement, no one will be raised up nor did the Qur'ān or Prophet (sws) ever make such a claim. Hence, meaningless is the claim of the people who are demanding that their forefathers should be raised to life and be shown to them.

The words وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ express sorrow at the state of the disbelievers of the Day of Judgement: there is no question of any doubt in what they are being informed of; however, most people know not; ie. they do not know the dreadful punishment they will encounter by denying this obvious reality.

وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّخْسَرُ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾[24]

If these people trust their alleged deities that they will save them in case there is a Day of Judgement, then this is a naïve notion. To God alone belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; no one can dare influence His decisions. Those who are afflicted with such baseless desires will be ruined when that Day comes.

وَتَرٰى كُلَّ اُمَّةٍ جَاثِيَةً ۚ كُلُّ اُمَّةٍ تُدْعٰٓى اِلٰى كِتٰبِهَا ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾[25]

The verse portrays the situation people will encounter on that Day: every group will be sitting on its knees with legs folded to hear the verdict; each group will be called towards its record of deeds and will be told that on that day they will receive what they did in the previous world.

Though the word تَرٰى is singular, however, its address like اَلَمْ تَرَ can also be general; here contextual evidence shows that this is the case here too.

The words كُلَّ اُمَّةٍ refer to the fact that on that Day everyone – believers as well as

24. And to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. And on the day when the Hour comes, the wrongdoers will be the losers.

25. And you shall see each community on its knees. Each community shall be summoned to its record of deeds. They will be told: "You shall this day be rewarded for your deeds."

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disbelievers, righteous as well as wrong-doers will be gathered; no one will be given exception in this attendance.

The word جَاثِيَةً is from جَثَا يَجْثُو. The expression جَثَا الرَّجُلُ has been explained by lexicographers as جَلَسَ عَلَى رُكْبَتَيْهِ (a person sat on both his knees).[26] Slaves, subordinates and criminals used to sit before their masters in this manner to hear their verdict.

The word كِتَاب here refers to the register of deeds because this book will contain the record of deeds of groups and nations. The word register is very aptly used thus. In Sūrah al-Taṭfīf, *inshā'Allāh*, this will be further explained. There the names of these registers are also mentioned.

Words to the effect قِيْلَ لَهُمْ (it will be said to them) are suppressed before اَلْيَوْمَ in اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ on account of contextual indication. Each group will be called towards its register of deeds and would be told that on that day it will be rewarded for whatever it did in the previous world.

The implied meaning is that a person who did not do good deeds and only dreamt of a blissful future on the basis of polytheism and intercession will find nothing but deprivation for himself on that day.

هٰذَا كِتٰبُنَا يَنْطِقُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ اِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنْسِخُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾[27]

What is said here is part of the previous sentence: they will be informed that there is no possibility of any injustice or oversight from this register; it will truly and faithfully tell them what each person did because the record of each would be found in written form. Whatever they have been doing was being noted down by the angels at the behest of God.

فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَيُدْخِلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿۳۰﴾[28]

This verse depicts the fate of each group once they have been informed of their record. The fate of the believers is mentioned first: those who believed and did good deeds will be admitted by God to His mercy. The word رَحْمَت (mercy) here refers to the fact that not only will these people be rewarded because of their deeds, they will be immensely blessed by Him as well. After this, they are praised by saying that it is this which is open success that these people will achieve and not the luxuries of this world by which these foolish people were lured away only to lose this eternal kingdom.

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26. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 14, 131.

27. "This is Our record which will bear true witness over you. We have been recording whatever you have been doing."

28. As for those who embraced faith and did good deeds, their Lord will admit them into His mercy. This is, in fact, a clear triumph.

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وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۣ اَفَلَمْ تَكُنْ اٰيٰتِيْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[29]

This verse depicts the fate of the disbelievers; their fate is mentioned in more detail than that of the believers. This *sūrah* specifically deals with them; in particular, with the arrogant among them. The verse says that as for those who disbelieved, they would be told that is not this a reality that when in order to inform them of this day, the verses of God would be recited out to them, they showed arrogance and persisted on their sins in spite of God's warnings and reminders. The details of their persistence on this arrogance have already been alluded to in verses 8-9 and 24-25 of this very *sūrah*. At this stage, the question posed to them would obviously not be meant to elicit an answer; the purpose would be to rebuke them in order to further humiliate them.

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّالسَّاعَةُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا قُلْتُمْ مَّا نَدْرِيْ مَا السَّاعَةُ ۙ اِنْ نَّظُنُّ اِلَّا ظَنًّا وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِمُسْتَيْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾[30]

The verse explains their arrogance: when it is said to them the promise of God regarding reward and punishment is bound to be fulfilled and that there is not the slightest doubt about the advent of the Day of Judgment, they answer with great arrogance that they do not know the meaning of the Day of Judgment; it is a thought in their hearts and they have no conviction in it.

It is evident from this verse that as far as the thought was concerned, these disbelievers did have it in their hearts; however, their demand was that only when they are fully convinced about it, then they will believe in it. Their demand [expressed earlier in the *sūrah*] was: اِئْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ (if you are true in your claim, bring back to us our fathers). Obviously, this was an absurd demand. It meant that a person will only believe in that thing which he can see from his eyes and will not believe in any other thing even though there may exist very clear logical and ethical arguments in its favour. If a person becomes so foolish, then the faculty of sense and reason becomes absolutely redundant; in fact, the only difference that then remains between man and cattle is that of appearance. This means that a person should not believe in the faculty of sense and reason a person has because he has never seen it nor touched it. If we evaluate the treasure trove of knowledge and its disciplines that man has, it will become evident that a large part of it comprises intellectual and moral principles. If the belief of these arrogant people of acknowledging only observable realities is accepted, then this would mean that all these branches of knowledge created by man should be dumped.

Deliberation will reveal the fact that in such important matters which can have far reaching results, the guidance of overriding conjecture is enough. A fissure created in a

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29. As for those who disbelieved, they will be told: "Were not My verses recited out before you; so you showed arrogance and you were a criminal people."

30. "And when you were told: 'God's promise is true and the Hour of Doom is sure to come,' you would reply: 'We know nothing of the Hour of Doom; it is only conjecture; nor are we convinced.'"

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dam which can endanger the whole city will not attract our attention only when it has become a wide hole; sensible people remain on guard in such matters much earlier. The matter of the Hereafter is a very important one – in fact the most important matter of this universe. The arguments in favour of it mentioned in the Qur'ān and in the previous scriptures are irrefutable. At best, what a person can say is that he cannot believe in it the way he can believe an eye-witness happening. If he cannot be convinced to such an extent, then let it be so; what should be seen is that can he say with full certainty that there is no Hereafter? Obviously, no one can make such a claim. In such a situation, prudence demands that a person compare which among the two scenarios is beneficial to him: should a person live his life being lured away by his desires becoming indifferent to the Hereafter and not even concern himself with what will happen after his death or should he believe in the Hereafter and lead a life while considering that he will be rewarded or punished one day though he might have to sacrifice some of his desires? Deliberation will lead us to conclude that it is more wise to adopt the second of these scenarios because adopting the first one can eternally and permanently put a person in danger and its only benefit is that he, as per his arrogant claim, will think that he is free to choose any life according to his desires even though their fulfillment is not based on his will. On the other hand, there is no danger in the second scenario. If the Hereafter comes, a person will be rewarded with an eternal kingdom, and if, as per the opinion of the disbelievers it does not come, what will be the loss? At best, he will have to sacrifice some of his worldly desires in this worldly life whilst their fulfillment too is not in his control and rests with some other Being.

وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾[31]

The consequences of the intellectual and moral sins a person does in this world do not come before him immediately; for this reason he becomes brave on this respite and regards his well-wishers to be fools and makes fun of them let alone paying heed to their advice. On that Day, the blindest of people will see the horrible harvest of the seeds he had sown in the previous world; the messengers of God had warned him of the evil fate of the venomous seeds he had cultivated, but he paid no heed to their warnings. On that day, the punishment he boldly used to make fun of will embrace him in such a manner that he will not be able to escape it in any way.

وَقِيْلَ الْيَوْمَ نَنْسٰىكُمْ كَمَا نَسِيْتُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا وَمَاْوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾[32]

The verb نَسِيَ here means "to ignore." In other words, in the very first phase, they

31. And the evil of their deeds they did will manifest itself to them, and what they would make fun of will encompass them.

32. And it will be said to them: "Today we will disregard you the way you remained oblivious of the meeting of this day of yours and Hell is your abode none will be your helper."

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would be told that just as in the previous world they had ignored the warnings of the messengers of God and his righteous people and did not pay heed to their calls about being raised up on such a horrible day, in a similar manner, God will ignore them on that Day. However much may they plead and beseech Him, they will not receive any response to their imploring. They should also remember that if they were very proud of their group of associates and comrades, they too will be of no help to them on that day, and if they trusted the intercession of their deities and of the partners they had imputed to God, then they too will be of no avail to them.

ذٰلِكُمْ بِاَنَّكُمُ اتَّخَذْتُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ هُزُوًا وَّ غَرَّتْكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُوْنَ مِنْهَا وَ لَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾[33]

The implication of this verse is that these people became worthy of this indifferent attitude from God because when His verses informing them of the Last Day would be recited out to them, they would make fun of them and would walk away from that place as if they had not heard a thing. This subject has already been brought up in verses 8 and 9 earlier.

The words وَ غَرَّتْكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا imply that they concluded from the affluence and opulence God blessed them with in this world that they were worthy of these favours and that this prosperity of theirs is an evidence to the fact that there is nothing wrong in their beliefs and deeds; their wealth and riches made them so arrogant that they made fun of those people who tried to direct their attention to the erroneous nature of their beliefs and deeds; they even went as far as to inquire from these well-wishers of theirs whether these well-wishers were better off or they themselves. They contended that when their circumstances were far better than those of their well-wishers, then why should they not believe that their beliefs and deeds were also better and that if there was something wrong, it was not in them but in their well-wishers.

The words فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُوْنَ مِنْهَا وَ لَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ state that because of this arrogance neither will they be able to come out of Hell nor afforded with the opportunity of seeking repentance from their Lord and win His favour. Every door to any hope will be closed upon them.

The change of style in this section of the verse is worth noting. In the previous section, the discourse directly addressed the disbelievers; here, they are no longer addressed. It is as if the threat to ignore them has begun to manifest itself so that they were not even deemed worthy of being directly addressed. It needs to be kept in mind that the indirect address is often used at instances when the addressees are not worthy of being addressed. Several examples of this style have been pointed out earlier in this exegesis.

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33. "This is because you made fun of God's verses and were led away by the worldly life." Thus, today neither shall they be taken out from it nor shall they be given the opportunity to present an apology.

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فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَرَبِّ الْاَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَهُ الْكِبْرِيَآءُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٣٧﴾[34]

Here, at the end, all the discussion thus far is summed up: when all facts are evident, then it is only God Who should be the fountainhead of all praise and gratitude from His creatures. He is the Lord of the heavens, Lord of the earth and Lord of all the creatures of the Universe. The implication of this statement is that from where have these people fashioned other deities as their Lord? How have they set up separate deities for the heavens and the earth? And in spite of being created and nurtured by God, why have they invented so many deities – both male and female?

The words وَ لَهُ الْكِبْرِيَآءُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَ هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ are the second necessary consequence of what is stated above: when God is the Lord of the Universe, then in the presence of the real Master and King, how can some other being be regarded as sovereign and exalted? In this situation, He alone has the right to all sovereignty; everyone must submit and resign themselves to Him; if anyone in His kingdom tries to rise against him, it is as if he challenges His sovereignty, and he who does so will necessarily meet his fate. God is Mighty ie. He is dominant and powerful. Thus no one can save himself from His grasp; however, He is wise as well; thus if He has given respite to people to rebel, then people should not misconstrue this lenience on His part that they are beyond His grasp. On the contrary, every act of God is based on wisdom and this wisdom will one day manifest itself before everyone.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of the exegesis of this *sūrah*: فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى اِحْسَانِهٖ (so all gratitude be to God for His favour).

Raḥmānābād,
21st June, 1976 AD
22nd Jumādī al-Thānī 1396 AH___

34. Thus, God alone is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Lord of the worlds, worthy of being praised and to Him belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and He is Mighty and Wise.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Aḥqāf (46)

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Sūrah al-Aḥqāf

Central Theme and relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This is the last Makkan *sūrah* of this group. After it come three Madīnan *sūrahs* which mention the fulfillment of the promises and the materialization of threats mentioned in the previous Makkan *sūrahs*. The Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah* is the same as that of the previous one and its opening verses are exactly the same as well. In this *sūrah*, the opponents of the Qur'ān are informed in very blatant words that the Day of Judgement which the Qur'ān is warning them of is certain to come. If on the basis of their beliefs about polytheism and intercession they are trying to ignore its warnings and regarding the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) to be an imposter, then they should remember that there is nothing in reason and revelation to support such superstitions. On the contrary, this Qur'ān is something whose news has been given beforehand by a great witness belonging to the Israelites and something whose predictions are mentioned in the Torah. Thus they should not be deceived by the encouragement and support they receive from the Jews and the Christians, for these people are denying their own messengers and scriptures.

After this, the Prophet (sws) is assured in very clear words that he should not care about his opponents. His responsibility is of only communicating this Book to others; only those people will profess faith in it who are straightforward and sincere and who are cognizant of their fate; he should not pin any hopes in these people who are indifferent and have no fear of any accountability; what he is presenting is so powerful and potent that when a group of jinn who while passing by had a chance to listen to it, it became its ardent admirers; if it is having no influence on these people, then there is no defect in it; it is, in fact, their hearts who are afflicted; he should continue patiently with his work and consign them to their fate which they will encounter very soon.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-14): The Qur'ān is a scripture revealed by God, the mighty and wise but those have denied the Hereafter are evading it. This world is not meant for the entertainment of a merry-maker; however, the Almighty has created it with a great purpose and meaning. Hence it is essential that one day it end and its fate manifest itself. These people trust their deities and intercessors; they reckon that if ever the Day of Judgement comes, they will save them whereas neither reason nor revelation

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corroborate the existence of the deities they impute with God. These people have pinned their hopes in them and the deities themselves are unaware that they are being worshipped and being called for help. On the Day of Judgement, these deities instead helping them would become their enemies. These people while being overawed by the reasoning of the Qur'ān regard it to be magic and regard the Prophet (sws) to be an imposter. Such obdurate people are not worthy of being attended to. The Prophet (sws) is directed to tell these people that he is not the first messenger of this world; many messengers have preceded him; he has the same traits and characteristics as the previous messengers; he should inform these people that if by being lured away by the Jews and Christians these people are opposing him, then they should fully contemplate the evil fate they are going to meet; a great witness of the Israelites has already borne witness to him and he is also the person who is the one whose predictions are recorded in the Torah; if poor people are professing faith in him, then they should not make this as an excuse to not embrace faith and thereby deprive themselves of God's mercy

Verses (15-20): The type of people who will profess faith in the Qur'ān and the type who will reject it are referred to.

Those people will profess faith in it who acknowledge the rights whose awareness is found in their nature, who feel indebted to their parents and are obedient to them; they may have committed sins in their youth while being overwhelmed with emotions; however, they never adopted a sinful life; they would generally repent after committing a sin. When they reached the ripe age of forty, they turned towards God with full sincerity and expressed: "Lord! Take care of us so that we are able to show gratitude to your favours to us and to our parents; bless us with the urge to do righteous deeds and make our children pious also; we turned towards you and are obedient to you." God will forgive the sins of such upright people and will include them among the dwellers of Paradise.

Those people will reject it who, on the contrary, led a careless and indifferent life; they neither recognized the rights of their parents nor that of God. If their parents warned them of the Hereafter and the accountability which will take place there, they scolded them by saying that this is mere bluff and that they will never profess faith in these nonsensical things; if there is life after death why do not the vast majority of dead come back to life.

God will reward or punish both these types of people in accordance with their deeds; the pious will be richly rewarded for their virtues and the evil will be punished for their vices. God will not be unjust to any.

When the arrogant, who were not professing faith in the Qur'ān by making the excuse that the poor have professed faith in it, are thrown into Hell, they will be told that they have taken their share of good things in the previous world; here nothing except ignominy awaits them.

Verses (21-28): The example of the people of 'Ād is cited to warn the Quraysh who

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were also warned of God's grasp the way they were; however, the 'Ād showing conceit in their power and might did not pay heed; at last the Almighty destroyed them even though they were much more powerful and mighty and much more developed in their civilization and culture than the Quraysh; all their intelligence and acumen could be of no avail to them against God.

Verses (29-32): In order to assure the Prophet (sws), an impression of the jinn about the Qur'ān is cited: if the worthless among the Quraysh are not duly honouring the Qur'ān, then this does not mean that there is some fault in the Qur'ān or in the Prophet (sws); this is in fact because of the hard hearts they possess. Such is the potent influence of the Qur'ān that when a few of its verses were overheard by a passing by group of jinn, they became so fascinated by it that they became its ardent preachers among their nation.

Verses (33-35): This is the concluding section of the *sūrah*. The disbelievers are warned and threatened and the Prophet (sws) is urged to show patience and perseverance.

Section I: Verses (1-14)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ﴿۱﴾ تَنۡزِیۡلُ الۡکِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰہِ الۡعَزِیۡزِ الۡحَکِیۡمِ ﴿۲﴾ مَا خَلَقۡنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ وَ مَا بَیۡنَہُمَاۤ اِلَّا بِالۡحَقِّ وَ اَجَلٍ
مُّسَمًّی ؕ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا عَمَّاۤ اُنۡذِرُوۡا مُعۡرِضُوۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ قُلۡ اَرَءَیۡتُمۡ مَّا تَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰہِ اَرُوۡنِیۡ مَاذَا خَلَقُوۡا مِنَ الۡاَرۡضِ اَمۡ
لَہُمۡ شِرۡکٌ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ ؕ اِیۡتُوۡنِیۡ بِکِتٰبٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِ ہٰذَاۤ اَوۡ اَثٰرَۃٍ مِّنۡ عِلۡمٍ اِنۡ کُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِیۡنَ ﴿۴﴾ وَ مَنۡ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنۡ یَّدۡعُوۡا مِنۡ
دُوۡنِ اللّٰہِ مَنۡ لَّا یَسۡتَجِیۡبُ لَہٗۤ اِلٰی یَوۡمِ الۡقِیٰمَۃِ وَ ہُمۡ عَنۡ دُعَآئِہِمۡ غٰفِلُوۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ وَ اِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ کَانُوۡا لَہُمۡ اَعۡدَآءً وَّ کَانُوۡا
بِعِبَادَتِہِمۡ کٰفِرِیۡنَ ﴿۶﴾ وَ اِذَا تُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡہِمۡ اٰیٰتُنَا بَیِّنٰتٍ قَالَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا لِلۡحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَہُمۡ ۙ ہٰذَا سِحۡرٌ مُّبِیۡنٌ ﴿۷﴾ اَمۡ
یَقُوۡلُوۡنَ افۡتَرٰىہُ ؕ قُلۡ اِنِ افۡتَرَیۡتُہٗ فَلَا تَمۡلِکُوۡنَ لِیۡ مِنَ اللّٰہِ شَیۡئًا ؕ ہُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا تُفِیۡضُوۡنَ فِیۡہِ ؕ کَفٰی بِہٖ شَہِیۡدًۢا بَیۡنِیۡ وَ
بَیۡنَکُمۡ ؕ وَ ہُوَ الۡغَفُوۡرُ الرَّحِیۡمُ ﴿۸﴾ قُلۡ مَا کُنۡتُ بِدۡعًا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ وَ مَاۤ اَدۡرِیۡ مَا یُفۡعَلُ بِیۡ وَ لَا بِکُمۡ ؕ اِنۡ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا یُوۡحٰۤی اِلَیَّ وَ
مَاۤ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِیۡرٌ مُّبِیۡنٌ ﴿۹﴾ قُلۡ اَرَءَیۡتُمۡ اِنۡ کَانَ مِنۡ عِنۡدِ اللّٰہِ وَ کَفَرۡتُمۡ بِہٖ وَ شَہِدَ شَاہِدٌ مِّنۡۢ بَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ عَلٰی مِثۡلِہٖ
فَاٰمَنَ وَ اسۡتَکۡبَرۡتُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ لَا یَہۡدِی الۡقَوۡمَ الظّٰلِمِیۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ وَ قَالَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا لِلَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَوۡ کَانَ خَیۡرًا مَّا سَبَقُوۡنَاۤ
اِلَیۡہِ ؕ وَ اِذۡ لَمۡ یَہۡتَدُوۡا بِہٖ فَسَیَقُوۡلُوۡنَ ہٰذَاۤ اِفۡکٌ قَدِیۡمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِہٖ کِتٰبُ مُوۡسٰۤی اِمَامًا وَّ رَحۡمَۃً ؕ وَ ہٰذَا کِتٰبٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ
لِّسَانًا عَرَبِیًّا لِّیُنۡذِرَ الَّذِیۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا ۟ وَ بُشۡرٰی لِلۡمُحۡسِنِیۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ قَالُوۡا رَبُّنَا اللّٰہُ ثُمَّ اسۡتَقَامُوۡا فَلَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَیۡہِمۡ وَ

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لَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

This is Hā mīm. This Book has been diligently revealed by God the Mighty One, the Wise One. (1-2)

We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them except with a purpose and for an appointed time. And those who have disbelieved pay no heed to what they have been informed of. (3)

Tell them: "Have you ever pondered on those whom you worship besides God? Show me what part of the earth have they created or who among them has a share in the heavens? Bring me a scripture revealed before this or some other vestige of knowledge, if what you say be true." And who is in greater error than those who invoke idols other than God which will never be able to respond to them till the Day of Judgement and they are also unaware of their invocations! And when people are called together, they will declare themselves their enemies and will disown their worship. (4-6)

And when Our very clear revelations are recited to them, these disbelievers say about the truth after it has come to them: "This is plain magic." Do these people say that he has invented it himself? Tell them: "If I have invented it, then there is nothing you can do to save me from God and He well knows about your frivolous talk. Sufficient is He as a witness between you and me. He is the Forgiving One, the Ever Merciful." (7-8)

Tell them: "I am not the first messenger nor do I know what will be done with me or you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and I am only an open warner." (9)

Ask them: "What will happen then if this Qur'an is indeed from God and you reject it; a witness from the Israelites has also testified to a book similar to it. So he professed faith in it, while you showed arrogance." Indeed, God does not guide the wrongdoers. (10)

The disbelievers said about the believers: "Had there been any good in the Qur'ān, these people would not have professed faith in it before us." And since they did not receive guidance from it, they will now say: "This is an old falsehood." (11)

And before it the Book of Moses is present: a guide and a blessing. And this Book is in confirmation of its predictions. It is in the Arabic tongue, to forewarn those who have wronged their souls and is glad tidings for the righteous. (12)

Indeed, people who affirmed: "Our Lord is God," and then persevered on it shall have nothing to fear or to be sad about. It is they who are the dwellers of Paradise; they will abide in it forever. This will be a reward for their labours. (13-14)

Explanation

حٰمٓ ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾[1]

Both these verses also form the opening part of the previous *sūrah*, and have been

1. This is Hā mīm. This Book has been diligently revealed by God the Mighty One, the Wise One.

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explained there as well. The fact that this *sūrah* also begins with the same name and the same opening verses shows that both *sūrahs* have something in common. Thus the coming verses will reveal this commonality and a summary will also come forth of all the previous Ḥamim *sūrahs*.

مَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَمَّآ اُنْذِرُوْا مُعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾[2]

This is an expression of sorrow on people who are adamant on denying the noble scripture revealed by God, the Mighty and the Wise. They were also insistent on evading that to inform them of which God had revealed this scripture.

The words عَمَّآ اُنْذِرُوْا refer to the Day of Judgement. Such is the nature of this reality that if it is not accepted, then the whole universe would seem a meaningless and purposeless place of entertainment. The fact, on the other hand, is that the Almighty has created this universe with a purpose and objective. God not only is Powerful; He is also wise. If the Hereafter is not accepted as a reality, then after viewing this world its Creator can indeed be regarded as powerful; however, it will have to be conceded that He has done a purposeless thing even though this is against His apparent attributes. Just as this world reflects His power, it also reflects His wisdom. Both these attributes exist in Him simultaneously. Here, readers may keep in mind the linguistic principle which has been alluded to at numerous places in this Book: when attributes are mentioned without a particle of conjunction the way they are here (الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ), then they exist simultaneously in the being they qualify.

The words اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى imply that just as it is evident that this universe has a purpose (بِالْحَقِّ), an obvious consequence of its purposefulness is that it should exist till a certain time period and not go on forever and that one day a court of justice be set up at the end; those who did pious deeds should then be rewarded and those who did evil deeds should then be punished.

Here it is possible that the question arise that reward and punishment are something very logical, but why is it necessary that the whole world end after a certain time period; is it not possible that this world continue to exist and those who die are continued to be rewarded or punished? This question generally arises in the presence of numerous misconceptions in the mind discussing which may not be appropriate here; however, I will allude to one thing here: every deed of a person whether it is a pious one or an evil one has the ability in it to be contagious. A person can sow the seeds of piety such that for centuries mankind is able to benefit from it; similarly, a person invents a wrong and misleading philosophy which engulfs numerous minds and then with the passage of time it becomes so firmly established that nation after nation

2. We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them except with a purpose and for an appointed time. And those who have disbelieved pay no heed to what they have been informed of.

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expend their abilities and potentials to strengthen it and it becomes virtually impossible to get rid of it. In the light of this background, if it is needed that a person be given true information of his good and evil deeds, then it is essential that the remotest of effect such philosophies be brought forth and any of the elements of nature which bear witness to that person's good and evil deeds be presented in support. Without this, perfect justice cannot take place. Thus it was deemed essential that this world end after a certain time and God decide the fate of people in a court in which all mankind is present. So much so, even if the testimony of the heavens and the earth is also required, all their records be furnished. This, of course, can only be possible when the Day of Judgement is common to all.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَرُوْنِيْ مَاذَا خَلَقُوْا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ اَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ ۭ اِيْتُوْنِيْ بِكِتٰبٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ هٰذَآ اَوْ اَثٰرَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ۝[3]

This verse brings forth the real reason of their evasion: since they rely on their alleged deities and intercessors, they do not pay heed to the warnings of the Qur'ān. In their opinion, in the very first place the Day of Judgement is a mere threat which is a bluff and if there is some truth to it, these deities which they worship will save them from every danger. The verse says that the Prophet (sws) should ask these people if they have ever reflected on what they worship besides God – whether they have any reality or not or whether they are mere products of their fancy; if they think that they have some reality, then they should show him (ie the Prophet (sws)) if they have created the earth or any part of its objects or if they have any role in the creation of the heavens and the earth. In other words, they can only deserve to be called partners of God if they have any role in the creation of the heavens and the earth. If they do not have any such role, then what is the meaning of regarding them to be partners of God Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. How can He tolerate them to be the masters of the world He has created! And on what reason did they regard it to be right to ascribe partners to His sovereignty and His rights without His permission. It should be kept in consideration here that the idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the Creator of everything. Thus this argument is based on something which they too acknowledged.

Consider next the last part of the verse: اِيْتُوْنِيْ بِكِتٰبٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ هٰذَآ اَوْ اَثٰرَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ. The term اَثٰرَةٍ refers to a tradition which is transmitted from someone's forefathers: It is stated in *Aqrab al-mawārid*:

والاثارة البقية من العلم تؤثر (وهم على أثارة من العلم) اى بقية منه يأثروتها من الاولين

3. Tell them: "Have you ever pondered on those whom you worship besides God? Show me what part of the earth have they created or who among them has a share in the heavens? Bring me a scripture revealed before this or some other vestige of knowledge, if what you say be true."

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And الاثارة refers to that part of knowledge which is transmitted as a tradition; the expression وهم على أثارة من العلم means that part of knowledge which they obtain from their earlier generations.[4]

The words which qualify it are meant to show that this tradition should be based on knowledge and not on fancy or conjecture.

The verse says that if these people claim that God has partnered their deities in governing His kingdom, then to prove the veracity of this claim they should either present a book before this Qur'ān or some tradition that is based on knowledge and not on fancy or conjecture. In other words, what is implied is that whether God has a partner or not is an issue which can only be resolved through God's testimony: only He can tell if He has partnered anyone and if He has, then only He can identity them? The only way to know the testimony of God is the Books revealed by Him or the traditions and vestiges which have been faithfully transmitted to later generations. If there is something like these, then it should be brought forth and merely on the basis of conjecture and speculation people should not ruin their fate by building castles of fancy in the air.

Here, it needs to be kept in mind that the revealed knowledge of God has either been transmitted through His scriptures like the Torah and the Gospel or through traditions. Thus the teachings of Abraham (sws) and other prophets have reached later generation through traditions. There is not the slightest evidence of any polytheism in the knowledge that has been transmitted through these means. Though the Torah, the Gospel and other scriptures have been inflicted with large-scale interpolations yet they contain no trace of polytheism. Similarly, the traditions about Abraham (sws) cited in the Torah, the Gospel and other scriptures do not contain the parasite of polytheism. The Idolaters of Arabia claimed to be adherents to the ways of their forefathers. However, in spite of repeated challenges from the Qur'ān, they were unable to prove if their ways had a religious or rational basis. Till the very end, they kept on saying that they were following the ways of their forefathers regardless of wherever their forefathers acquired these ways from.

وَ مَنۡ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنۡ يَّدۡعُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مَنۡ لَّا يَسۡتَجِيۡبُ لَهٗۤ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الۡقِيٰمَةِ وَ هُمۡ عَنۡ دُعَآئِهِمۡ غٰفِلُوۡنَ ۝ وَ اِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوۡا لَهُمۡ اَعۡدَآءً وَّ كَانُوۡا بِعِبَادَتِهِمۡ كٰفِرِيۡنَ ۝[5]

This is an expression of sorrow on the situation of these naïve people: who can be

4. Al-Khūrī, *Aqrab al-mawārid*, vol. 1, 41.

5. And who is in greater error than those who invoke idols other than God which will never be able to respond to them till the Day of Judgement and they are also unaware of their invocations! And when people are called together, they will declare themselves their enemies and will disown their worship.

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more unfortunate or farther in error than those who invoke and beseech others than God who will never be able to respond to them till the Day of Judgement. On other hand, the ones who are invoked are not even aware of these invocations. In the Hereafter, these alleged deities will in fact turn up to be their enemies and will curse them, let alone helping them.

The beings which the Idolaters worshipped were either fictitious so that the question of being informed of invocations of the worshippers does not even arise. As for those beings who have some reality like the angels and the jinn whom the Idolaters of Arabia worshipped or Jesus (sws) whom the Chrisitans worshipped, they could not be aware of any invocations to them let alone accept them. It is mentioned in Sūrah al-Mā'idah that God will ask Jesus (sws) on the Day of Judgement if he had taught people to worship him and his mother. He will reply that how could he have said such a thing which he had no right to say and that he had told them what God had asked him to and what they did after his death was not known to him and that only God knew it.

In Sūrah al-Furqān, the rejoinder of the angels is mentioned in the following words:

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَيَقُوْلُ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَضْلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِيْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيْلَ. قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْۢبَغِيْ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُوْنِكَ مِنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ وَلٰكِنْ مَّتَّعْتَهُمْ وَاٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ ۚ وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًۢا بُوْرًا. (۲۵: ۱۷-۱۸)

And remember the day when God gathers them and all which they worship besides him. So, He will then ask them: "Was it you who misled these servants of Mine or did they choose to go astray?" They will answer: "Glory be to You! It was not befitting for us to choose other guardians besides You. But what happened is that You gave them and their fathers Your favours so that they forgot Your reminder and were doomed." (25: 17-19)

It is evident from this that as far as the prophets and the righteous are concerned, they will hold those people responsible who made them partners of God and worshipped them in absolute violation of the teachings of these prophets and the righteous. As for others like the jinn and the devils who were also worshipped, the details of the way they will acquit themselves from their followers and the way these followers will curse them can be seen in various *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān. It is evident from these details that they will be the greatest enemies of their worshippers, let alone bringing benefit to them. Readers are advised to look up my explanation of verses 62-64 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ.

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ ۙ هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝[6]

This verse refers to the various excuses which these Idolaters would invent to run

6. And when Our very clear revelations are recited to them, these disbelievers say about the truth after it has come to them: "This is plain magic."

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away from the call of the Qur'ān. It says that when the very clear verses of the Qur'ān relating to monotheism and the Hereafter are recited before them, and they do not have any answer to them, they regard the Qur'ān to be pure magic. It has been explained at various places in this exegesis as to why these people would thus call the Qur'ān. When the leaders of the Quraysh were left with no option but to accept and acknowledge the potent influence of the Qur'ān, they tried to convince their masses that though this Qur'ān is very powerful and moving, yet this in no way is a reason to regard it to be divine; on the contrary, it is purely a magic of words.

The words لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ after لِلْحَقِّ are meant to express condemnation: they regarded this truth to be magic when it came to them; it is not improbable that a person be deceived of the truth as long as it does not make itself plain before him; however, once it becomes evident, only those people make such excuses who want to live in deception and want to lead others to deception as well.

اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ؕ قُلْ اِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهٗ فَلَا تَمْلِكُوْنَ لِیْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ؕ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُفِيْضُوْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ كَفٰى بِهٖ شَهِيْدًا بَيْنِیْ وَ بَيْنَكُمْ ؕ وَهُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝[7]

This is a reference to another propaganda worked up against the Qur'ān by its opponents. Since this was an absolutely baseless propaganda and its baseless nature was fully evident to its perpetrators, it is expressed here in a style that reflects amazement and wonder: instead of responding to it, the matter has been entrusted to God. They are told that if in their frenzy to deny the Prophet (sws), they, against the calls of their own conscience, have gone as far as to regard him to be someone who has concocted the Qur'ān himself and then ascribed it to God, then any discussion with them is purposeless. Only God will decide this matter.

The words قُلْ اِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهٗ فَلَا تَمْلِكُوْنَ لِیْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا imply that if these people think that the Prophet (sws) has authored the Qur'ān and then wrongly attributed it to God, he should not engage in any discussion with them; he should just tell them that if he had forged such a big lie on God nothing could have saved him from the clutches of God, and at that time, these people will not be able to help him that they may consider the burden of this crime on themselves.

Consider the next part of the verse: هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُفِيْضُوْنَ فِيْهِ. The expression أفاض فی الحدیث has been explained earlier in this exegesis. Its primary meaning is to criticize something to the extent of making a mountain of a mole-hill. In other words, the Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that God is fully aware of the hair-splitting they are indulging in and so he has consigned this matter to Him; God will decide whether he

7. Do these people say that he has invented it himself? Tell them: "If I have invented it, then there is nothing you can do to save me from God and He well knows about your frivolous talk. Sufficient is He as a witness between you and me. He is the Forgiving One, the Ever Merciful."

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is a fabricator as a result of which they are not giving him any importance or regarding him as a fabricator, in spite of mind him to be righteous and honest, merely because his message is against their whims and desires.

The words كَفٰى بِهٖ شَهِيْدًا بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ imply that in this dispute God suffices as a witness between the Prophet (sws) and them. It needs to be kept in consideration here that when it becomes evident that the contesting group is bent upon obduracy, animosity and fraud and is intentionally saying something which is against its conscience, then, in this situation, the only option left for a reasonable person is to end the debate by consigning the matter to God. This civilized way at times induces adamant addressees to review their attitude. Even if they are not influenced by this way, this indeed is the blessed way viz a viz preaching. Unbiased people are definitely influenced by it and the status of a preacher also increases manifolds in the eyes of his opponents because of this display of self-confidence.

The words وَهُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ imply that the Prophet (sws) has consigned this matter to God in the hope that He will definitely give His verdict in it and it will become evident to all whether the Prophet (sws) is a fabricator or if these people are intentionally denying the truth; if there is any delay in this verdict, even then there is no reason for him to be worried or lose hope; for he knows that his Lord is Gracious and Ever Merciful; He is not hasty in punishing people and in fact gives them full respite so that those among them who want to repent and mend their ways are afforded the opportunity and can thereby earn His mercy.

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدْعًا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَآ اَدْرِيْ مَا يُفْعَلُ بِيْ وَلَا بِكُمْ ۭ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ وَمَآ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝[8]

The Prophet (sws) is asked to communicate to his people that if they are opposing him because he is a human being like them and is unable to show the punishment he is threatening them with, then they should remember that he is not the first human being who has been sent as a messenger; many messengers have preceded him and all of them were human beings; none of them was a super human; it has remained the practice of God that to human beings, human beings are sent as messengers. The Prophet (sws) is also asked to communicate to them that if he is not able to bring the punishment as per their demand, then this also does not negate his claim to messengerhood. He should tell them that this is because he has claimed to be a messenger and not God who knows the unknown; he should further inform them that he fully acknowledges that he does not know how He will be dealt with by God nor does he know how they will be dealt with by Him and that he is only following the revelations sent down to him and also informing them of these revelations and that he is an open warner to them as per the directives of God and that he has no responsibility beyond this nor claims to be someone

8. Tell them: "I am not the first messenger nor do I know what will be done with me or you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and I am only an open warner."

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beyond this. The implication is that if they want to debate with him, then it should relate to his real claim and by raising irrelevant questions, they should neither put themselves nor others through bother .

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهٖ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَلٰى مِثْلِهٖ فَاٰمَنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾[9]

The answer to the conditional statement is suppressed here. This suppression is pointing towards the fact that this answer encompasses such horrible consequences as are unable to be expressed in words. The Prophet (sws) is asked to communicate to these people that they are very obdurately denying this Book and are regarding it to be concocted by the Prophet (sws) who has falsely ascribed it to God; however, if it in fact turns out to be from God, then what will they do. He is further asked to tell them that they must also think that a witness from the Israelites has borne testimony to such a thing, and himself professed faith in it while they are evading it out of sheer arrogance.

Here a question arises as to who this witness is. Our exegetes have given three answers to it:

The general opinion is that this refers to 'Abdullāh ibn Salām (rta);[10] however, a group of scholars has objected to this opinion on the grounds that he embraced Islam in Madīnah many years after the revelation of this *sūrah*; so how can a reference to his testimony be cited in this Makkan *sūrah* even before he embraced faith when there is not even the slightest indication of at least this verse being regarded as a Madīnan one.

The second group thinks that this is a reference to Moses (sws);[11] however, this view too is not tenable. In the succeeding verses, he is mentioned by name together with the Torah separately with reference to bearing witness in favour of the Qur'ān. So what is the need of mentioning him here without specifying him?

A third group has regarded it to be a generic noun and interprets it to mean the witness borne by the common masses of the Israelites who professed faith in the Qur'ān. This group includes Ibn Kathīr;[12] however, this view is absolutely baseless. To regard it to be a generic noun will be absolutely against linguistic principles; however, I do not want to engage myself in this unnecessary discussion. The style of the discourse itself bears witness that here the undefined noun is for magnitude (*tafkhīm shā'n*) and not for derision (*taḥqīr*) or generality (*ta'mīm*). Thus it is necessary that the reference be to someone whose personality as well as whose

9. Ask them: "What will happen then if this Qur'an is indeed from God and you reject it; a witness from the Israelites has also testified to a book similar to it. So he professed faith in it, while you showed arrogance." Indeed, God does not guide the wrongdoers.

10. See, for example: Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayan*, vol. 26, 10. (*Translator*)

11. Ibid., vol. 26, 9.

12. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 157. (*Translator*)

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bearing witness is of such import that it can be presented as testimony.

In my opinion, this reference is to Jesus (sws). Following are its reasons:

1. The first reason for this is that the Jesus (sws) has said that the special purpose of his advent is to clean the way for a comer. After him, Muḥammad (sws) was sent as the last prophet and the last messenger. For this reason, this "comer" can only refer to him and no one else whatsoever. A study of the Gospels reveals that just as before the advent of Jesus (sws), the prophet Yaḥyā (sws) was sent to give glad tidings of his arrival, similarly, before the arrival of Muḥammad (sws), the last prophet, Jesus (sws) was sent to clean the way for a comer. The real topic of the Gospels which is discussed in them in various styles is the glad tidings of Muḥammad (sws). My mentor, Imām Ḥamid al-Dīn Farāhī, has written a special treatise on this topic in the English Language showing that the real purpose of the Gospels is to introduce and describe the prophet Muḥammad (sws). The "kingdom of heaven" mentioned very frequently by Jesus (sws) and described in the form of parables all relate to prophet Muḥammad (sws) and to the Qur'ānic call.

2. The second important thing is that though the predictions about Muḥammad (sws) are also present in the Torah and the Psalms and I have cited references about them in previous *sūrahs* but Jesus (sws) has made predictions about him by actually naming him. In Sūrah al-Ṣaff, this is referred to thus:

وَاِذْ قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُوْلٍ يَّاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِى اسْمُهٗٓ اَحْمَدُ ؕ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالُوْا هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ. (٦١:٦)

And remember when Jesus son of Mary said: "O Israelites! I have come to you as a Messenger from God in realization of the predictions which exist before me in the Torah, and to give glad tidings of a Messenger who will come after me whose name is Aḥmad. So when he came to them with clear signs, they said: "This is plain magic." (61:6)

The glad tidings referred to by the Qur'ān in this *sūrah* are present in the Gospels. In some of the Gospels, the Prophet (sws) is repeatedly mentioned by his very majestic name like the Gospel of Barnabas. The Christians do not regard it to be an authentic Gospel but this does not make any difference; other Gospels too contain a reference of the Prophet (sws). In them, though he is not mentioned by his name, yet his mention by his traits and characteristics is still intact and even translations have tried to distort these traits. However, a person who honestly reflects on these traits will be compelled to acknowledge that they refer to no one other than the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). I will confine myself to these brief hints and *inshā'Allāh* deal in detail with this issue in Sūrah al-Ṣaff.

3. The third thing is that Jesus (sws) has mentioned very clearly the Qur'ān, the message of the Qur'ān and the nature of this message, the dominance of its message in

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the world and the various phases of this dominance. In verse 19 of Sūrah al-Fatḥ also, I will discuss this issue. For the assurance of the readers, I am citing some references below:

> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. (Matthew, 21:42-44)

> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever. (John, 14:17)

> I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me. (John, 14:31)

There are numerous parables which depict the gradual expansion and growth of the Islamic dawah. One of these parables, which is also referred to by the Qur'ān, is thus:

> He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches. (Matthew, 13:31-32)

4. The fourth important thing is that the impact of this clear testimony borne by Jesus (sws) is that those among people who were true Nazarenes and as such were followers of Simon, the true successor of Jesus (sws) professed faith in the Qur'ān with great zeal after it was revealed, and the Qur'ān has paid tribute to them in very majestic words. In Sūrah al-Mā'idah, this group is mentioned thus:

لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا ۚ وَلَتَجِدَنَّ اَقْرَبَهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰى ۭ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيْسِيْنَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَّاَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ. وَاِذَا سَمِعُوْا مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ تَرٰٓى اَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوْا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ. (۵: ۸۲-۸۳)

> You will find the Jews and the Idolaters to be the most blatant enemies of the believers and find the nearest in affection to them those who say: "We are Nazarenes." This is because there are priests and monks among them; and because they are free from arrogance. When they listen to that which has been revealed to

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the Messenger, you see their eyes fill with tears because they recognize the truth. They cry out: "Lord, we profess faith. So count us among the witnesses." (5:82-83)

Readers may go through the explanation of these verses in this exegesis. People are not very well aware of the history of the Nazarenes. That is why the real meaning of these verses could not become evident to them. They do not praise the followers of Paul; on the contrary, they praise the followers of Simon. The followers of Paul would also not call themselves as Nazarenes. They would think that this was a degrading word for them and in its place they adopted the word Christians for themselves. The followers of Simon indeed called themselves as Nazarenes. These people were the bearers of witness which was given by Jesus (sws) regarding the advent of the last messenger of God. The words رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ (Lord! We profess faith. So count us among the witnesses,") point to this. These people were not inflicted with conceit the way Paul and his followers were. For this reason, they were blessed with the treasure of embracing Islam. It is about these people that Jesus (sws) had predicted: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," (Matthew, 5:3). In the verses of Sūrah al-Mā'idah quoted above, the words وَ اَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ (and because they are free from arrogance) point to this very quality of theirs.

It is evident from all these details that the nature of Jesus' testimony is entirely different from a common testimony. The very objective of his prophethood was to pave the way for Muḥammad (sws) and to give glad tidings to mankind of the kingdom of heaven which was to be established through his hands. With reference to this, the Qur'ān conclusively communicated to both the Idolaters and the People of the Book the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws). I have mentioned earlier on that in this phase of preaching of Muḥammad (sws), the Idolaters were being backed by the People of the Book and as a result they were in very high spirits. The Qur'ān here has shown that in the frenzy of opposing Islam these Jews and Christians may do whatever they want to but a great witness from among the Israelites has already borne witness to this truth in blatant words and has professed faith in it. After his professing faith and bearing witness those who merely on the basis of arrogance will deny the truth should fully contemplate the fate they will meet.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ refer to the established practice of God about blessing people with guidance and depriving them of it. I have referred to it many times in this exegesis: God never guides those who wrong their souls and do not duly honour the light He blesses them with. Through a person's sense and reason and the testimony of the world within and that outside him as well through the testimony of His prophets and messengers, He has totally unveiled the truth. Now He is not responsible to guide all those people who instead of using all these sources as a means for their guidance are trying to use them to go astray. He leaves such people to wander about.

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وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَاِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوْا بِهٖ فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هٰذَآ اِفْكٌ قَدِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾[13]

The arrogance of the rejecters of truth referred to in the previous verse is explained here: such is the extent of the arrogance of these callous people that one argument they bring in their favour is that the poor were the first to accept Islam; their rich say that had there been any good in this religion it would not have been possible that these poor paupers had taken lead from them in accepting it. They meant that no favour or blessing of the world was given to these people; so had this religion also been a favour or blessing, these destitute would have never been able to outdo them in accepting it. Their outdoing them is evidence of the fact that there is no good in it; it, in fact, belongs to that category of things ordinary that people are after.

The words وَ اِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوْا بِهٖ فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هٰذَآ اِفْكٌ قَدِيْمٌ imply that now that instead of obtaining guidance from this light these people have led themselves in error through it, they will not stop at what they have said; they will further say that this is not a new lie; it is one that is being transmitted from ancient times; there have remained people in every age who have used these warnings as bluffs over others and never has what they said every happened; they will further say that the Day of Judgement with which they are being warned never came nor will it ever come; the lie of these people has been exposed and for this reason, they are not going to be bluffed by them.

It is evident from contextual indication that the words الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا refer to the affluent among the disbelievers whose arrogance is mentioned in the previous verse. The words لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا refer to the poor and destitute among the believers and the particle ل here occurs in the meaning of فِی. This usage can be seen at many places in the Qur'ān.

It is evident from the words وَ اِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوْا بِهٖ that when they have rejected a blatant truth, then in order to appease their conscience and to fool others they will have to fabricate more excuses. Thus they will say that this lie is an ancient one. The argument which they want to give by regarding it to be an ancient lie is that that its falsity is a proven fact. If the Day of Judgement was to come, then why has it not appeared; it is being mentioned ever since a long time but never has it manifested itself.

وَمِنْ قَبْلِهٖ كِتٰبُ مُوْسٰٓى اِمَامًا وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّيُنْذِرَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۬ وَبُشْرٰى لِلْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾[14]

This verse expresses the testimony of the Torah in favour of the Qur'ān. If chronology is to be kept in consideration, it should have been mentioned earlier;

13. The disbelievers said about the believers: "Had there been any good in the Qur'ān, these people would not have professed faith in it before us." And since they did not receive guidance from it, they will now say: "This is an old falsehood."

14. And before it the Book of Moses is present: a guide and a blessing. And this Book is in confirmation of its predictions. It is in the Arabic tongue, to forewarn those who have wronged their souls and is glad tidings for the righteous.

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however, because of the special reasons which I have alluded to earlier the testimony of Jesus (sws) was mentioned first. This reference of the Torah expresses the continuity of the testimony: before this, the Book of Moses (sws) has come as an *imām* and mercy. The word *imām* means "guide." This is exactly the same thing as has been stated about the Qur'ān by the words هُدىً وَرَحْمَةٌ (guidance and mercy). I have explained that these words are used with respect to both this world and the next. The Book of God guides people in this world and in the next becomes a means of God's mercy. Its real nature is that of a leader. Just as it is essential that a leader be obeyed, it is essential that this Book be obeyed in the matters of this world. If this status of this Book is not acknowledged, then however much it may be respected by the tongue and however much it may be kissed to honour it, all these acts are meaningless in the eyes of God.

The words وَ هٰذَا كِتٰبٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا refer to the Qur'ān: it was revealed in Arabic in confirmation of the predictions of the Torah. Just as Jesus (sws) has borne witness to it, in a similar way, Moses (sws) too has made predictions about it earlier on. These predictions were awaiting to be materialized. The revelation of the Qur'ān was a materialization of these predictions and in this manner the Qur'ān attested the Torah.

Generally, people have interpreted this verse to mean that since Qur'ān accepts the Torah as a divine book, hence the Qur'ān too is a divine Book. This is an absolutely absurd interpretation. If the Qur'ān regards the Torah to be a divine Book, then this indeed is an argument to regard the Torah to be divine; but how can this prove the Qur'ān to be divine. The Qur'ān can be attested to be divine by the Torah only when from within its texts are predictions about it and its bearer, and with the revelation of the Qur'ān and the advent of the Prophet (sws) these predictions are attested to in such a manner that no just person can refute them; in fact, every honest and unbiased person will whole-heartedly acknowledge that these predictions have truly materialized and the person who was referred to by them has actually substantiated these predictions. It is with regard to this aspect that the Qur'ān has been called the attester (*miṣdāq*) to the previous scriptures, and not with regard to the aspect generally understood by people. The Qur'ān indeed regards these scriptures to be divine but at the same time declares them to be inflicted with corruptions. For this reason, this attestation is not absolute; it is specific to the meaning I have just explained. It is very common in Arabic to use the word *taṣdīq* in this meaning. I have explained this usage earlier in this exegesis.

The words لِسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّيُنْذِرَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا express a favour done to the Quraysh and also refer to some predictions made by the Torah. The first of these aspects is evident: God by revealing the Qur'ān in Arabic enhanced the respect commanded by the language, lent it the sanction of eternal existence, chose the Arabs to communicate and bear witness to His religion and left them with no excuse to deny the truth. With regard to the second aspect, it should be kept in mind that it is found in the Torah about the last Messenger that he will be from among the unlettered ie. the Ishmaelites. It is obvious

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that the language of these unlettered people was Arabic; thus a reference to their language is in fact a reference to the Arabs themselves.

The words لِيُنْذِرَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا allude to the objective of this Book: the Almighty has revealed this Book so that people who have been unjust to themselves by being incriminated with polytheism and disbelief be informed of their fate so that those who want to reform themselves can do so before materialization of the final consequences.

The words وَبُشْرٰى لِلْمُحْسِنِيْنَ allude to the second objective of this Book: it is a great and eternal glad tiding for the righteous. Since this is the real objective of the Book, it is mentioned in the form of a noun. The word مُحْسِنِيْنَ occurs here in contrast to الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا. This contrast highlights the meaning of the word: it refers to people who guarded all their potentials and abilities and spent their lives within the limits stipulated by their Creator.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوْا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾[15]

These verses not only explain the glad tiding referred to in the previous verse, but also refer to a specific trait of the righteous. The verse says that people who accepted the true calls of the Qur'ān and declared that only God was their Lord and fearlessly adhered to this declaration in spite of every opposition are given an eternal glad tiding: they will neither have any fear of the future nor any sorrow of the past; they will be the eternal dwellers of Paradise which will be given to them as a reward of their deeds.

Section II: Verses (15-20)

In the coming verses, in order to assure the Prophet (sws), he is informed of the type of people to whom this Book will appeal to and the type who will always remain put off from it. This in fact is a further elaboration of the two categories of people referred to earlier by the words مُحْسِنِيْنَ and الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا. It is evident from this that people who have an upright nature, who are sensitive to the truth, who control their emotions, who recognize the rights of their parents will be the ones who will fulfill the rights of their parents. The message of the Qur'ān will appeal to them. As far as those people are concerned who live without any sense of accountability and are indifferent to their responsibilities as well as their rights and obligations, one should not expect any good from them; they will do what they are doing and end up with the same fate which is destined for such indifferent people. Readers may now proceed to recite the next section of verses.

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15. Indeed, people who affirmed: "Our Lord is God," and then persevered on it shall have nothing to fear or to be sad about. It is they who are the dwellers of Paradise; they will abide in it forever. This will be a reward for their labours.

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Text and Translation

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ اِحْسٰنًا ؕ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ كُرْهًا وَّوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا ؕ وَحَمْلُهٗ وَفِصٰلُهٗ ثَلٰثُوْنَ شَهْرًا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغَ
اَشُدَّهٗ وَبَلَغَ اَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ اَوْزِعْنِيْٓ اَنْ اَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَيَّ وَاَنْ اَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضٰىهُ وَ
اَصْلِحْ لِيْ فِيْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ ۚ اِنِّيْ تُبْتُ اِلَيْكَ وَاِنِّيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنْهُمْ اَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَنَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ
سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ فِيْٓ اَصْحٰبِ الْجَنَّةِ ؕ وَعْدَ الصِّدْقِ الَّذِيْ كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْ قَالَ لِوَالِدَيْهِ اُفٍّ لَّكُمَآ اَتَعِدٰنِنِيْٓ اَنْ اُخْرَجَ وَقَدْ
خَلَتِ الْقُرُوْنُ مِنْ قَبْلِيْ ۚ وَهُمَا يَسْتَغِيْثٰنِ اللّٰهَ وَيْلَكَ اٰمِنْ ۖ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ ۚ فَيَقُوْلُ مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾
اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِيْٓ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجٰتٌ
مِّمَّا عَمِلُوْا ۚ وَلِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ اَعْمَالَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَلَى النَّارِ ؕ اَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبٰتِكُمْ فِيْ حَيَاتِكُمُ
الدُّنْيَا وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْسُقُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾

And We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents. With pain his mother bore him, and with pain she delivered him. And bearing him and weaning him took thirty months. So that when he grows to manhood and attains his fortieth year, he prays: "Lord! Take hold of me that I may be able to express my gratitude to You for the favours You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and to do good deeds which will please You. And grant me good descendants. To You I turn and to You I submit." These are the people from whom We will accept their good deeds and overlook their misdeeds with the Companions of Paradise. This is a true promise which is being made to them. (15-16)

As for he who rebukes his parents and says to them: "Shame on you! Do you threaten me that I will be brought to life again even though generations have passed before me?" – and they are beseeching God: "cursed be you! have faith; the promise of God is true"; so he thus replies: "All these are but tales ancient." These are the people for whom the threat of God materialized with bygone nations of jinn and men. Indeed, they were among those who did not succeed. (17-18)

And for each of them are ranks in accordance with their deeds [so that the promise of God may come true] and so that He may duly give them all their deeds and they shall not be wronged. And remember the day when the disbelievers will be brought before Hell and they will be told: "You took away the good things of your share in your earthly life and used them. So today you will get a humiliating torment in return because you showed conceit in this world without any right and because you remained disobedient." (19-20)

Explanation

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ اِحْسٰنًا ؕ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ كُرْهًا وَّوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا ؕ وَحَمْلُهٗ وَفِصٰلُهٗ ثَلٰثُوْنَ شَهْرًا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ

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وَبَلَغَ اَرۡبَعِيۡنَ سَنَةً ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ اَوۡزِعۡنِىۡۤ اَنۡ اَشۡكُرَ نِعۡمَتَكَ الَّتِىۡۤ اَنۡعَمۡتَ عَلَىَّ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَىَّ وَاَنۡ اَعۡمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرۡضٰٮهُ وَاَصۡلِحۡ لِىۡ فِىۡ ذُرِّيَّتِىۡ ۚ اِنِّىۡ تُبۡتُ اِلَيۡكَ وَاِنِّىۡ مِنَ الۡمُسۡلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾[16]

This, as we have indicated before, is an explanation of how the natural evolution and development of the comprehension of rights and obligations takes place or should take place in an upright and worthy person. The verse says that the Almighty has enjoined man to treat his parents with kindness. He has also ingrained this directive in man's nature and all the prophets of God and righteous people also taught this. In all religions of the world, this is an acknowledged reality that after God the parents have the greatest right on a person. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that as far as comprehension is concerned, it is the right of the parents which a person feels the foremost. It is through the comprehension of his parent's right that he reaches God and the comprehension of His rights. As long as he remains an infant, he considers his parents to be everything because whatever he acquires, he acquires from them. However, once he reaches maturity, he becomes aware of the fact that the real Lord and Bestower of Favours is the one who even created his parents. In this manner, through his parents, he reaches God, and he becomes aware of a being Who has a greater right on him than his parents. And these two are the greatest rights on a person and from these two emanate the branches of various other rights.

The right of the parents on a person is that when he reaches his bloom and they reach old age, he should not consider them to be a burden on him. In fact, he should remember that there was a time when he was thrown in their laps in the form of a lump of meat; but, instead of regarding him to be a burden, they regarded him to be the radiance of their eyes and the comfort of their hearts and brought him up. The obligation he owes to them for this favour of theirs is that he should always show obedience to them and show love and affection to them. He should not regard serving them to be a burden on him nor should he utter any words of repulsion to them.

The words حَمَلَتۡهُ اُمُّهٗ كُرۡهًا وَّوَضَعَتۡهُ كُرۡهًا ؕ وَحَمۡلُهٗ وَفِصٰلُهٗ ثَلٰثُوۡنَ شَهۡرًا refer to the sacrifices which every mother necessarily makes for her children. The purpose of this reference is to direct attention to the fact that whatever may the children do, they can never repay the favours of their parents. The verse says that a mother carries her child for months in her womb and then delivers it while risking her own life. After that comes the time of suckling the child. For two whole years, she feeds the child with her milk with great effort and raises and nurtures it. The implication is that no one can match her effort. Is

16. And We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents. With pain his mother bore him, and with pain she delivered him. And bearing him and weaning him took thirty months. So that when he grows to manhood and attains his fortieth year, he prays: "Lord! Take hold of me that I may be able to express my gratitude to You for the favours You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and to do good deeds which will please You. And grant me good descendants. To You I turn and to You I submit."

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there anyone who can bear so many hardships with such happiness? So how great an expression of ingratitude will it be from the children if they forget these favours and when the parents need these from the children, they show indifference.

Here, an important point worthy of note is that the demand for showing kindness relates both to the mother and the father; however, the three sacrifices mentioned only relate to the mother. No sacrifice of the father is mentioned. In my opinion, this is because of the following reasons:

1. The extent of role a mother plays in the initial upbringing of the child is much more than that of a father. Thus it is mentioned in a narrative that the Prophet (sws) has regarded a mother's right to be thrice that of the father viz a viz serving her.[17] This narrative is based on this very verse.

2. The mother belongs to the weaker gender. This aspect necessitates that the children obey and serve her more than the father.

3. To a father primarily relates the financial interest of the children. Since they are to inherit wealth and property from him, there is lesser fear of the children disobeying him. On the other hand, in general circumstances, this is not the case with the mother and for this reason those people do not duly value her are the ones who do not have the correct awareness of the sacrifices made by her.

From the words وَ حَمْلُهٗ وَ فِصٰلُهٗ ثَلٰثُوْنَ شَهْرًا some jurists among the Companions have deduced that the shortest period of pregnancy is six months because here the total time period for pregnancy and suckling is mentioned as thirty months, and at another place in the Qur'ān it is mentioned that the suckling period spans two full years. If this two year period is subtracted from these thirty months, six months remain for the pregnancy period, which shows that its shortest duration is six months. This is a subtle deduction and it is evident from various narratives that such senior Companions as 'Uthmān (rta) and 'Alī (rta) have expressed their agreement to this opinion.[18]

The words حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ وَ بَلَغَ اَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ اَوْزِعْنِيْٓ اَنْ اَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَ عَلٰى وَالِدَيَّ وَ اَنْ اَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضٰىهُ وَ اَصْلِحْ لِيْ فِيْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ ۚ اِنِّيْ تُبْتُ اِلَيْكَ وَ اِنِّيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ imply that when a person who recognizes the rights of his parents reaches the age of maturity, this upright nature of his also necessarily awakens in him the true comprehension of his Lord. In the reflection of the love and affection shown by his parents and in their diligence in raising him, he sees a glimpse of the love and affection and providence of the real Creator and from here he be able to access the path that leads him to his real Lord Who blessed him with affectionate parents for his upbringing. In other words, the awareness of a right induces him to fulfill a greater right. If the sensitivity of fulfilling the rights of the parents is not found in a person, then he cannot be aware of fulfilling the rights of God. It is the rights of the parents which are the sign-posts that take him

17. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, 2227, (no. 5626).

18. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 158. (*Translator*)

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to this destination. A person who did not open this door will find the next path closed to him.

The verse says that when such an upright person reaches maturity, in particular, the age of forty, he prays to God to take hold of him so that he is able to find the urge in himself to express his gratitude to God for His favours done to him and to his parents and to do such pious deeds as please God. He also prays to God that He bless him with pious descendents and that he has turned to Him and made a commitment to Him to remain obedient to Him.

The real time for this awareness is youth or the age of maturity which is termed here as بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ. However, the real factor to attain this maturity is not merely age; in fact, factors such as environment, education and moral training besides others also have a great role to play; hence, this age of maturity is not the same in all people. Thus, there exists a difference of opinion in this issue between our scholars and there are very understandable reasons for this. In my opinion, the Almighty has placed great variation in it keeping in view our weaknesses and the forty years mentioned here is the last limit of this age. The implication is that once a person becomes a young adult, this awareness should be awakened in every upright person. If in someone because of some adverse factors, it is not awakened or is not fully awakened, then it must appear by the age of forty. If after attaining even this age it does not appear, then it means that that a person has perverted his nature. It is evident from this that the Gracious and Merciful God will treat us leniently till the age of forty keeping in view our various weaknesses. The reason obviously is that because till this age there is a great influence of emotions and desires on a person. Even if he tries to mend his ways, he, at times, loses his way by being overwhelmed by these emotions and desires. After the age of forty, these emotions lose force. If he does not stimulate them wrongly, he can control and discipline them. For this reason, he should not expect any further lenience after this age.

It should be kept in mind that what is said here is said while keeping in mind the general circumstances and general types of human nature. It is not said while keeping in view a pure Islamic society and environment. In a society afflicted with evil, there are many adverse factors which hinder a person's resolve. For this reason, the Almighty treats such people with special lenience who try to reform themselves in such a society. In an Islamic society, these adverse factors do not exist; for this reason, its people will face more rigorous standards of accountability.

The word اَوْزِعْنِیْٓ has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Naml. It means "get hold of me," "take control of me." In other words the implied meaning is: "Lord! Till now I have been carried away by my emotions; please now give me the urge that instead of being carried away by the frenzy of my emotions, I am able to express gratitude to Your innumerable favours You have done to me and my parents." It should be kept in mind here that this feeling of gratitude is the foundation of all aspects of religion. I have

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discussed this in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah.

The words وَ اَنۡ اَعۡمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرۡضٰٮهُ imply that feelings of gratitude necessarily motivate a person to pious deeds and pious deeds are deeds in which a person seeks the pleasure of God instead of going after his own whims and desires. At times, there is a misconception which a person comes across in this way: he does something in his own estimation to please God but instead of pleasing Him, it angers Him. For example, deeds which are virtues outwardly but are incriminated with polytheism and innovations. For this reason, a person should continue to also pray to God to guide him to those virtuous deeds which please God.

The words وَ اَصۡلِحۡ لِىۡ فِىۡ ذُرِّيَّتِىۡ say that, at the same time, he prays for his progeny that God bless him with noble descendents from among them so that he not only feels proud in this world but in the next also their pious deeds are able to intercede for him. I have already explained this subject in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Furqān under the following verse:

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ رَبَّنَا هَبۡ لَنَا مِنۡ اَزۡوَاجِنَا وَ ذُرِّيّٰتِنَا قُرَّةَ اَعۡيُنٍ وَّ اجۡعَلۡنَا لِلۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ اِمَامًا. (۲۵:۷٤)

And those who say: "Our Lord! Bless us with the comfort of our eyes from our wives and children and make us the leaders of the righteous. (25:74)

The words اِنِّىۡ تُبۡتُ اِلَيۡكَ وَ اِنِّىۡ مِنَ الۡمُسۡلِمِيۡنَ express his pious declaration regarding the future: he has turned to God and solemnly promised to remain among His faithful servants.

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنۡهُمۡ اَحۡسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوۡا وَ نَتَجَاوَزُ عَنۡ سَيِّاٰتِهِمۡ فِىۡۤ اَصۡحٰبِ الۡجَنَّةِ ؕ وَعۡدَ الصِّدۡقِ الَّذِىۡ كَانُوۡا يُوۡعَدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾[19]

The verse says that it is these people whose good deeds God will accept and whose sins He will forgive.

The words فِىۡۤ اَصۡحٰبِ الۡجَنَّةِ express the state (*ḥāl*); ie. they will be dealt with the way the dwellers of Paradise are and they will be regarded among them.

The verbal noun وَعۡدَ الصِّدۡقِ here is declined in the accusative as an emphasized object (*al-maf'ūl al-muṭlaq*). It is a true and firm promise and there is no possibility of its violation.

This verse as I have referred to earlier is an exhortation to the young adults particularly people who have reached the age of forty; in fact, it is more of warning as it tells them that this is the last age for them to mend their ways. If even after this they do not do so, they will deprive themselves of God's lenience.

19. These are the people from whom We will accept their good deeds and overlook their misdeeds with the Companions of Paradise. This is a true promise which is being made to them.

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وَالَّذِیْ قَالَ لِوَالِدَیْهِ اُفٍّ لَّكُمَآ اَتَعِدٰنِنِیْٓ اَنْ اُخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلَتِ الْقُرُوْنُ مِنْ قَبْلِیْ ۚ وَهُمَا یَسْتَغِیْثٰنِ اللّٰهَ وَیْلَكَ اٰمِنْ ۖ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ ۖ فَیَقُوْلُ مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِیْرُ الْاَوَّلِیْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾[20]

This is a mention of people who lead a life of indifference and have no fear of any accountability whatsoever.

I have pointed out at a number of places in this exegesis that when الَّذِی is used to cite a parable, it does not necessarily refer to a specific person; in fact, it refers to every person on whom the parable can apply. A very clear example of this can be seen in verse ninety two of Sūrah al-Naḥl. In the verse under discussion too the case is no different. Thus in the succeeding verses it is mentioned in the plural form. People who are not aware of this linguistic style of Arabic try at every place to regard الَّذِیْ as referring to a specific individual. They tread far beyond the real meaning of the verse. Thus here too some people have regarded it to refer to 'Abd al-Raḥmān (rta), the son of Abū Bakr (rta).[21] Though our exegetes have rejected this view; however, their rejection is not based on any sound reason. Thus the question still remains that if the word الَّذِیْ refers to a defined noun, then who is it alluding to in this verse? This question does not arise in the way I have interpreted it.

These verses depict a group in contrast to the one mentioned earlier. It is said that the young adults who lead an indifferent and careless life never have the urge to asses their deeds. When their parents caution them on their ill-ways and remind them of God and the Hereafter, they badly scold them. Their parents very affectionately and sympathetically try to urge their son to adopt the path of righteousness and to be aware that certain is the promise of God. In response, he says that are they threatening him that he will be raised to life again from his grave; this is a very improbable thing; generation after generation has passed and none of them has been raised to life; so how can he believe of his own resurrection to life; in fact, all these are tales of the ancient; there are people in every age who say these meaningless things that the Day of Judgement is coming; on the contrary, it was never supposed to come; so it neither came nor will it ever come.

The word وَیْل in وَیْلَكَ اٰمِنْ generally expresses curse and condemnation; however, at times, it expresses concern, compassion and affection. Several apt examples of this usage can be seen in classical Arabic literature. Here too it is used in this connotation. The Qur'ān says that some parents very compassionately try to convince their child by saying: "Cursed be you! Don't be obdurate; desist from your evil ways; adopt the path

20. As for he who rebukes his parents and says to them: "Shame on you! Do you threaten me that I will be brought to life again even though generations have passed before me?" – and they are beseeching God: "cursed be you! have faith; the promise of God is true"; so he thus replies: "all these are but tales ancient."

21. See, for example: Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, vol. 19, 26.

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of your faith and fear the Hereafter." However, instead of benefiting from this affection of theirs, he scolds them with great abhorrence.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٨﴾[22]

This verse portrays the fate of the people referred to in the previous verse. Here the pronouns, demonstrative nouns and verbs are all in the plural. So much so, the word الَّذِی has become الَّذِيْنَ. This is a clear proof of the fact that the previous verse does not refer to some specific individual; it, in fact, alludes to a certain category of people. The verse says that these are the people on which the statement of God was fulfilled. The expression "statement of God" points to the answer God gave to Iblīs in response to his challenge viz: He will fill Hell with Iblīs and all those human beings and jinn who will follow him. The occasion of placement of the words فِيْٓ أُمَمٍ is exactly the same as of فِيْٓ اَصْحٰبِ الْجَنَّةِ in the previous verse. The purpose is to emphatically communicate to them that they will become the companions of those human beings and jinn who before them had ruined their Hereafter by spending their lives in indifference and carelessness.

وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجَاتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا ۚ وَلِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾[23]

The word كُلّ refers to both the groups mentioned earlier. The verse says that both these groups will be rewarded in accordance with their deeds. Those who recognized the rights of their parents and their Lord and also fulfilled them will be rewarded with their respective level in Paradise. Those who led a life of indifference and apathy will be cast into that section of Hell which is commensurate with the evil deeds they committed. The word دَرَجٰتٌ is mentioned by referring to the dominant element (*'alā sabīl al-taghlīb*); the lowest level will in fact be no level.

The clause to which the expression وَ لِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ is appended to is suppressed here. Examples of such a suppression can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* as well. In my translation, I have unveiled this suppression.

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ ۖ أَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبَاتِكُمْ فِي حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُم بِهَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنتُمْ تَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾[24]

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22. These are the people for whom the threat of God materialized with bygone nations of jinn and men. Indeed, they were among those who did not succeed.

23. And for each of them are ranks in accordance with their deeds [so that the promise of God may come true] and so that He may duly give them all their deeds and they shall not be wronged.

24. And remember the day when the disbelievers will be brought before Hell and they will be told: "You took away the good things of your share in your earthly life and used them. So

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Though the previous verse briefly mentions the fate of deeds of both the groups, this verse specifically addresses the arrogant among the Quraysh. Hence their fate is specially referred to. The verse says that the day should be kept in remembrance when these arrogant people will be called forth before Hell and they will be told that they have fully benefited in the previous world from the favours ordained for them; now only a humiliating torment awaits them because in the previous world they showed arrogance and haughtiness without any right and continued to disobey God's directives.

The words اَذۡهَبۡتُمۡ طَيِّبٰتِكُمۡ refer to the fact that they have consumed their share of favours. If people who are blessed with favours in this world show gratitude to God and fulfill the rights of His creatures, they gather more favours for the Hereafter. On the contrary, people who become arrogant and conceited after being blessed with favours, they consume their quota of favours in this very world; in the Hereafter, they will be punished for not fulfilling their obligations towards these favours.

The words بِغَيۡرِ الۡحَقِّ which qualify the arrogance and haughtiness shown by them expresses the fact that since God blesses them with all the favours, what right has a person to show such behaviour after receiving them. It is only befitting for a person to show pride when he himself is the originator of something and without any role played by God acquires something on the basis of his own personal ability. When everything is God-given, then showing pride is absolute foolishness and ignorance and an even greater foolishness is that a person uses the very favours blessed to him by God in disobeying Him.

Section III (Verses 21-28)

This section of verses briefly portrays the denial of the 'Ād nation and their fate. The purpose is to assure the Prophet (sws) and to warn the arrogant Quraysh that if they do not desist from their attitude, they too will end up with a similar fate.

Readers may now proceed forth.

Text and Translation

وَاذۡكُرۡ اَخَا عَادٍ ؕ اِذۡ اَنۡذَرَ قَوۡمَهٗ بِالۡاَحۡقَافِ وَقَدۡ خَلَتِ النُّذُرُ مِنۡۢ بَيۡنِ يَدَيۡهِ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهٖۤ اَلَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡۤا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنِّيۡۤ اَخَافُ
عَلَيۡكُمۡ عَذَابَ يَوۡمٍ عَظِيۡمٍ ﴿۲۱﴾ قَالُوۡۤا اَجِئۡتَنَا لِتَاۡفِكَنَا عَنۡ اٰلِهَتِنَا ۚ فَاۡتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَاۤ اِنۡ كُنۡتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ قَالَ اِنَّمَا
الۡعِلۡمُ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاُبَلِّغُكُمۡ مَّاۤ اُرۡسِلۡتُ بِهٖ وَلٰكِنِّيۡۤ اَرٰىكُمۡ قَوۡمًا تَجۡهَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَوۡهُ عَارِضًا مُّسۡتَقۡبِلَ اَوۡدِيَتِهِمۡ ۙ قَالُوۡا

today you will get a humiliating torment in return because you showed conceit in this world without any right and because you remained disobedient."

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هٰذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا ؕ بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهٖ ؕ رِيْحٌ فِيْهَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۲۴﴾ تُدَمِّرُ كُلَّ شَیْءٍۭ بِاَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَاَصْبَحُوْا لَا يُرٰٓى
اِلَّا مَسٰكِنُهُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنّٰهُمْ فِيْمَآ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰكُمْ فِيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَّاَبْصَارًا وَّ
اَفْـِٕدَةً ۖ فَمَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَآ اَبْصَارُهُمْ وَلَآ اَفْـِٕدَتُهُمْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ اِذْ كَانُوْا يَجْحَدُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ
يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْقُرٰى وَصَرَّفْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ فَلَوْ لَا نَصَرَهُمُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا
مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ قُرْبَانًا اٰلِهَةً ؕ بَلْ ضَلُّوْا عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَذٰلِكَ اِفْكُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾

And remember the brother of ʻĀd when he informed his people in Aḥqāf: "Worship none other than God. I fear for you the torment of a fateful day." And in front and behind him informers had already come. They replied: "Have you come to turn us away from our gods by telling a lie? So bring down the scourge you threaten us with, if you are truthful!" He said: "God alone has true knowledge about it. I am only conveying to you the message I have been sent with. But I can see that you are afflicted with sheer ignorance." (21-23)

And when they saw the scourge in the form of a cloud heading for their valleys, they said: "This is a passing cloud that will drench us." "By no means! It is that what you had been seeking to hasten: it is a hurricane which contains a woeful scourge. It will totally rout everything at the bidding of its Lord." Thus they became such that there was nothing to be seen besides their dwellings. Thus do We punish the wrongdoers. (24-25)

And We had made them wealthy and powerful to the extent which We did not make you and gave them ears and eyes and hearts. But since they remained deniers of God's signs nothing did their ears, their eyes, or their hearts avail them. The thing they had been making fun of encompassed them. And We destroyed the cities around you, and presented Our signs to their people in various styles so that they may take heed. So why did their deities not help them – the deities they had set up besides God to bring them close to Him? Indeed, all of them became useless to them and this was their lie and fabrication. (26-28)

Explanation

وَاذْكُرْ اَخَا عَادٍ ؕ اِذْ اَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهٗ بِالْاَحْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَتِ النُّذُرُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖٓ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ
عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۲۱﴾[25]

The words اَخَا عَادٍ refer to the prophet Hūd (rta) who was sent as a Messenger to the nation of ʻĀd. He belonged to this nation and hence is called the brother of the ʻĀd. The fact that a messenger belongs to his own nation has many significant aspects with

25. And remember the brother of ʻĀd when he informed his people in Aḥqāf: "Worship none other than God. I fear for you the torment of a fateful day." And in front and behind him informers had already come.

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regard to the conclusive communication of the truth that I have been explaining in this exegesis.

Lexicons say that the word اَحْقَافِ refers to rectangular sand dunes;[26] however, here it refers to the desert which stretches between Oman, Yemen, Najd and Hadrmawt and is also called by the name اَحْقَافِ (Aḥqāf) It is the original dwelling place of the people of 'Ād. By mentioning this place by its name, the Qur'ān has directed attention to the great destruction that took place in this area. Obviously, the era in which the nation of 'Ād was at its peak in this area would be the time when this area would have been very green and lush and impregnated with those great cultural feats which made the 'Ād very famous and powerful in history. However, now that area is no more than a desolate desert. Nobody can imagine that this place was once inhabited and bustling with life. In my opinion, this place was named as Aḥqāf after the decline of the 'Ād when in place of majestic structures only sand dunes remained.

The words وَقَدْ خَلَتِ النُّذُرُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖٓ are a parenthetical sentence. The word نُذُرُ is the plural of نَذِيْرٌ (warner). The implication is that the warnings sounded by the Prophet Hūd (sws) are nothing new. Warners have already come to territories in front of his and those behind it and the signs of the torment with which they had threatened people were also present there. However, just as the earlier generations did not take heed from their respective warners, these later generations also did not benefit from the warnings of their warner.

The words اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ express the real warning sounded by the Prophet Hūd (rta) to his people. He asked them not to worship anyone other than God; if they do not desist from worshipping others besides God, then he fears that the torment of a dreadful day will waylay them. It is evident from this that the real basis of evil is polytheism. From this evil springs the branches of all other evils. For this very reason, the Messengers of God have informed their people about it the foremost and have told them that if people do not desist from it, they will become targets of God's grueling scourge. Polytheism on this earth is no less than high treason against God. For this reason, the nation to which God conclusively delivers the truth is not granted further respite if it does not abstain from it.

قَالُوْٓا اَجِئْتَنَا لِتَاْفِكَنَا عَنْ اٰلِهَتِنَا ۚ فَاْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾[27]

The word اِفْكٌ means "to tell a lie." The preposition عَنْ after it shows that this word encompasses the meaning of another word which means "to cause someone to give up something or to cause someone to turn away from something." In other words, they answer the Prophet Hūd (sws) by exclaiming that he has come to them as a messenger

26. See, for example: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 5, 304.

27. They replied: "Have you come to turn us away from our gods by telling a lie? So bring down the scourge you threaten us with, if you are truthful!"

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to bluff them about his messengerhood as well as about a punishment in order to turn them away from their deities; if this is the case, then he should bring forth this doom he is threatening them with; unless this demand is met, they will not regard him to be a true messenger.

قَالَ اِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاُبَلِّغُكُمْ مَّآ اُرْسِلْتُ بِهٖ وَلٰكِنِّيْٓ اَرٰىكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾[28]

In response to their demand to bring God's punishment, Hūd told them that he was asked by God to inform them about it; thus he has done this; as far is its time of arrival and the form in which it will manifest itself are concerned, only God has their knowledge; he does not have any information about them; however, he is observing that they are inflicted with sheer ignorance; instead of thinking of ways and means to halt this punishment, they are calling for its advent; he is not one to bring this danger; he is one to forewarn them of it.

فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُّسْتَقْبِلَ اَوْدِيَتِهِمْ ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا ۭ بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهٖ ۭ رِيْحٌ فِيْهَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٤﴾[29]

The antecedent of the accusative pronoun in رَاَوْهُ is the punishment mentioned in the previous verse. The word عَارِضٌ means "cloud" and here it is an accusative of state (*ḥāl*). The implied meaning is that when the very punishment they wanted to hasten descended on their valleys in the form of a cloud, they were overjoyed remarking that it was a rain-drenched cloud that will drench their valleys.

The words بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهٖ imply that the circumstances showed what they thought to be a rain-drenched cloud was, on the contrary, the punishment they wanted to hasten.

The words رِيْحٌ فِيْهَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ delineate the nature of this punishment: it was a stormy wind that concealed the punishment. At another place in the Qur'ān, this stormy wind is called صرصر which blew on them for many days and totally routed them. It is mentioned thus in Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah:

وَاَمَّا عَادٌ فَاُهْلِكُوْا بِرِيْحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ. سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَّثَمٰنِيَةَ اَيَّامٍ ۙ حُسُوْمًا ۙ فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيْهَا صَرْعٰى ۙ كَاَنَّهُمْ اَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ. (٦٩: ٦-٧)

And as for the 'Ād, they were destroyed by an uncontrollable storm. God let loose

28. He said: "God alone has true knowledge about it. I am only conveying to you the message I have been sent with. But I can see that you are afflicted with sheer ignorance."

29. And when they saw the scourge in the form of a cloud heading for their valleys, they said: "This is a passing cloud that will drench us." "By no means! It is that what you had been seeking to hasten: it is a hurricane which contains a woeful scourge.

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it on them for seven nights and eight days to ravage them. You would have seen them lying overthrown as though they were hollow trunks of palm-trees. (69:6-7)

تُدَمِّرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَأَصْبَحُوا لَا يُرَىٰ إِلَّا مَسَاكِنُهُمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾[30]

This is a reference to the way the tempestuous wind mentioned earlier routed them; nothing except the signs of their destroyed dwellings could be seen.

The words كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ point to the fact that it should not be construed that this is a mere tale of yester years; the fact is that the Almighty always punishes the wrongdoers in such a fashion. So if the Quraysh too adopt the same attitude as that of the ‘Ād, there is no reason that God deal differently with them. They too shall necessarily meet the same fate because God's law is the same for all.

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِيمَا إِنْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِيهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَأَبْصَارًا وَأَفْئِدَةً فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُهُمْ وَلَا أَفْئِدَتُهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِذْ كَانُوا يَجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾[31]

The Quraysh are directly addressed here and the lesson which they should have learnt from it is put forth before them. They are told that the abundance in means and resources enjoyed by the ‘Ād as well as the majesty and power reflected in their phenomenal ability to build and construct was much more than what the Quraysh possessed. But when God seized them, they were not able to save themselves. He blessed them with all the abilities of hearing and sight and also blessed them with sense and intellect; however, since they were not prepared to accept the light of God's revelations, their ears, eyes and hearts could be of no avail to them; in spite of possessing all the intelligence, they were seized by the very torment of God they had been making fun of.

It is evident from these details that the real light of the ears, eyes and hearts is produced by the revelations of God. If these faculties are not lit up by the radiance of God's revelations, they can only feel and see the apparent and the tangible. And here too, people spend all their might to earn material benefits. The result of being slaves to the apparent and the tangible is that these abilities and faculties become rusty. A person is not able to look and reflect beyond the apparent and material aspects of things nor does he think that there is any such need even though the real aspect that requires deliberation is the one beyond what is the apparent and the tangible. It is

30. It will totally rout everything at the bidding of its Lord. Thus they became such that there was nothing to be seen besides their dwellings. Thus do We punish the wrongdoers.

31. And We had made them wealthy and powerful to the extent which We did not make you and gave them ears and eyes and hearts. But since they remained deniers of God's signs nothing did their ears, their eyes, or their hearts avail them. The thing they had been making fun of encompassed them.

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because of this that the Qur'ān (7:179) has commented about such people that they have ears but they hear not and they have eyes but they see not and they have hearts but they understand not.

وَلَقَدْ اَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْقُرٰى وَصَرَّفْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾[32]

This verse also addresses the Quraysh. They are told that if the anecdote of the 'Ād is distant history, they should reflect on their surroundings. In order to remove the veils stretched before the eyes and hearts of these people, God's signs were presented to them in various styles and forms so that they turn to their real Creator and Master. But they rejected these signs as a result of which God destroyed them.

This is a reference to the demolished and wrecked cities which the Quraysh had the opportunity to pass by in their trade journeys.

فَلَوْلَا نَصَرَهُمُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ قُرْبَانًا اٰلِهَةً ؕ بَلْ ضَلُّوْا عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَذٰلِكَ اِفْكُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾[33]

This verse poses a question before the Quraysh: if they think that their deities will be able to save them from God's grasp, then why did they not do so in the case of the earlier peoples. These people too had taken up these deities thinking them to be a means to God's nearness. The words بَلْ ضَلُّوْا عَنْهُمْ say that at the very moment when their help was needed, they were lost to them and none could be of any benefit to them.

The words وَذٰلِكَ اِفْكُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ point to the fact that all this was a lie and fabrication from them. They regarded them to be deities from their own fancies and then falsely ascribed them to be God's favourites and that He has regarded them to be His partners.

The word قُرْبَانًا is a causative object (*maf'ūl lahū*). This is a reference to the belief of the Idolaters alluded to in the verse: مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ اِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُوْنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ زُلْفٰى. (٣٩ :٣) (we worship them only that they may bring us as near to God as possible, (39:3)).

It needs to be kept in consideration that the deities these Idolaters worshipped were not worshipped by them because they thought that these deities were the creators and masters of the creatures; they worshipped them because they thought that they were God's favourites and worshipping these deities would bring them closer to God. This belief of them regarding angels is discussed at many places in this exegesis.

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32. And We destroyed the cities around you, and presented Our signs to their people in various styles so that they may take heed.

33. So why did their deities not help them – the deities they had set up besides God to bring them close to Him? Indeed, all of them became useless to them and this was their lie and fabrication.

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Section IV: Verses (29-35)

In this section, the Prophet (sws) is assured in a few verses to not be sad if his people are not duly honouring this Book. The blame does not lie on the Book or on him; it is their own crooked nature which is responsible for their aversion. The fact is that so moving and effective is this Book that if a group of pious jinn was able to hear it by chance, they became fully attentive to it and went back to their people with its message to reform them through it. It is a pity if these people for whom this Book has been revealed are not valuing it.

In the closing verses of the *sūrah*, the disbelievers are warned and threatened and the Prophet (sws) is urged to show patience and forbearance.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَاِذْ صَرَفْنَآ اِلَيْكَ نَفَرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوْهُ قَالُوْٓا اَنْصِتُوْا ۚ فَلَمَّا قُضِيَ وَلَّوْا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ مُّنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾
قَالُوْا يٰقَوْمَنَآ اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتٰبًا اُنْزِلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مُوْسٰى مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ وَاِلٰى طَرِيْقٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ يٰقَوْمَنَآ
اَجِيْبُوْا دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِهٖ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ وَ يُجِرْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٣١﴾ وَمَنْ لَّا يُجِبْ دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي
الْاَرْضِ وَلَيْسَ لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءُ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ وَلَمْ يَعْيَ
بِخَلْقِهِنَّ بِقٰدِرٍ عَلٰٓي اَنْ يُّحْيِۦَ الْمَوْتٰى ۭ بَلٰٓى اِنَّهٗ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَلَى النَّارِ ۭ اَلَيْسَ هٰذَا
بِالْحَقِّ ۭ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَرَبِّنَا ۭ قَالَ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ اُولُوا الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ
لَّهُمْ ۭ كَاَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ۙ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوْٓا اِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ ۭ بَلٰغٌ ۚ فَهَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

And bear in mind when We directed a band of jinn to you that they may listen to the Qur'an. So, when they came to him they said to each other: "Listen by remaining silent." As soon as it finished, they returned to their people giving them warning. They said: "Our people! We have been listening to a scripture revealed after Moses in confirmation of the predictions that exist about it beforehand. This Book guides towards the truth and to a straight path. O People of Ours! Answer the call of God's summoner and profess faith in him! God will forgive your sins and give you refuge from a woeful scourge. (29-31)

And he who does not pay heed to God's summoner should remember that he is not beyond God's grasp in this earth nor shall there be anyone to help him against God. These are the people who are in open error. Have they not reflected that the God Who created the heavens and the earth and was not fatigued by their creation also has the power to raise the dead to life? Yes. He has power over all things. (32-33)

And keep in mind the Day when the disbelievers are brought before Hell. They shall

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be asked: "Is this not real?" They will reply: "Yes, by our Lord! This is real." It shall be said to them: "Then taste the torment as a punishment of your disbelief." (34)

Thus persevere the way other steadfast messengers persevered and do not seek to hurry for them. The day they behold what they are being threatened with they will feel as if they did not stay more than an hour of a day. Thus it is to communicate! Ultimately, death is surely for those who are the disobedient. (35)

Explanation

وَاِذۡ صَرَفۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ نَفَرًا مِّنَ الۡجِنِّ يَسۡتَمِعُوۡنَ الۡقُرۡاٰنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوۡهُ قَالُوۡۤا اَنۡصِتُوۡا ۚ فَلَمَّا قُضِىَ وَلَّوۡا اِلٰى قَوۡمِهِمۡ مُّنۡذِرِيۡنَ ﴿۲۹﴾[34]

It is evident from the word صَرَفۡنَاۤ that the incident of the jinn overhearing the Qur'ān was a chance happening ordained by God. Neither did the Prophet (sws) make any special arrangement for it nor did the jinn have any prior intention to listen to it. It is God Who all of a sudden directed the attention of a group of them to do so. Thus they heard it and were so moved by it that they became its ardent admirers and not only this, they embarked upon a mission of calling their people towards it.

It is evident from various narratives[35] that this incident took place when the Prophet (sws) reached Nakhlah to spend a night there on his way back from Ṭā'if – very much dejected at what had happened there. It was here that in one of his night prayers when he was reciting out the Qur'ān, a group of jinn chanced by and overheard his recital. The effect it had on them is referred to earlier and more details will follow in the succeeding verses. The purpose of mentioning this incident is to highlight the fact that the people for whom this Book was revealed and for whose reformation the Messenger of God was diligently striving and to find whom he journeyed from Makkah to Ṭā'if, they were neither willing to hear it out and on the contrary were adopting a very despicable attitude with the Messenger whereas the upright among the jinn who accidentally heard a few of its verses were so stirred by it that they became its fervent proponents among their people. It is thus evident that the fault does not lie in the Qur'ān or its bearer; it lies in the people themselves who were evading it.

The words فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوۡهُ قَالُوۡۤا اَنۡصِتُوۡا imply that as soon as they heard the Qur'ān, they beckoned their companions to silently and respectfully hear these divine words so that God may have mercy on them. This reference to the respect and becoming behaviour shown by them is a slant on the misdemeanour and misbehaviour shown by the miscreants of Makkah and Ṭā'if mentioned at various in the Qur'ān. They were the ones who would teach their associates to create a rumpus when the Qur'ān is read out so that its voice is stifled and they remain dominant. This attitude of theirs is mentioned thus in

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34. And bear in mind when We directed a band of jinn to you that they may listen to the Qur'an. So, when they came to him they said to each other: "Listen by remaining silent." As soon as it finished, they returned to their people giving them warning."

35. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 163. (*Translator*)

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Sūrah al-Jinn: (١٩:٧٢) وَّاَنَّهٗ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ يَدْعُوْهُ كَادُوْا يَكُوْنُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا (and that when this servant of God stands to invoke only Him, it seems as if they will rush upon him, (72:19)).

The words فَلَمَّا قُضِيَ وَلَّوْا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ مُّنْذِرِيْنَ bear testimony to the true and factual influence this recital had on them: they did not stop at merely praising and lauding its words; they embarked upon a campaign to inform their people of the danger this Book was informing people. It should remain evident that there are always people in the worst of times who may commend what is good and true; however, there is no significance of this praise unless a practical change comes in a person's life through it. In these times also, there are numerous people who eulogize and extol the eloquence and articulacy of the Qur'ān; however, virtually non-existent are those who abide by its directives in their practical lives. The verse under discussion states that these jinn while becoming fearless of all dangers embarked upon proclaiming this Book in their decadent society.

قَالُوْا يٰقَوْمَنَآ اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتٰبًا اُنْزِلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مُوْسٰى مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ وَاِلٰى طَرِيْقٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ يٰقَوْمَنَآ اَجِيْبُوْا دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِهٖ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ وَيُجِرْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٣١﴾ وَمَنْ لَّا يُجِبْ دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَيْسَ لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءُ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٢﴾[36]

This is the call these jinn gave to their misled people. First, they introduced this Book to their people that it was revealed after Moses (sws) in confirmation of the predictions found about it in previous scriptures. It may be kept in mind that after Moses (sws), it is only Muḥammad who as a Messenger gave a new *sharī'ah*. Before him, all prophets of the Israelites followed the Mosaic *sharī'ah.* Similarly, the status of the real divine Book before the Qur'ān was occupied by the Torah; other divine scriptures were its supplements. After the Torah, it was the Qur'ān that can be regarded as an independent Book, and the greatest testimony to its divine origin is that it was revealed in confirmation of the predictions already found about it in the Torah and in other divine scriptures.

The section يَهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ وَاِلٰى طَرِيْقٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ occurs in Sūrah al-Jinn with slight difference of words thus: (١:٧٢-٢) اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْاٰنًا عَجَبًا. يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَاٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ؕ وَلَنْ نُّشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَآ اَحَدًا. (we have heard a Qur'ān wondrous, which shows guidance to the right path and we will not by any means associate any one with our Lord, (72:1-2)). By comparing both these, it is evident that the word الْحَقِّ implies the belief of monotheism which is the straight path

36. They said: "Our people! We have been listening to a scripture revealed after Moses in confirmation of the predictions that exist about it beforehand. This Book guides towards the truth and to a straight path. O People of Ours! Answer the call of God's summoner and profess faith in him! God will forgive your sins and give you refuge from a woeful scourge. And he who does not pay heed to God's summoner should remember that he is not beyond God's grasp in this earth nor shall there be anyone to help him against God. These are the people who are in open error.

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that leads a person to God. It also refers to the firmly established and firmly grounded nature of this belief as well as it being in accordance with reality and with the norms of sense and human nature. The expression طَرِيْقٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ (straight path) is referring to the fact that it is easy, leveled out and free from deviations and both these traits necessitate one another. It occurs as an undefined noun to express grandeur and majesty (*tafkhīm*).

After this, the real message is referred to which the jinn delivered to their people: they should respond to the call of this summoner of God and profess faith in him. The imperative words وَاٰمِنُوْا بِهٖ (profess faith) allude to the response they should give for the real thing required is professing faith. God will forgive the sins of those who will do so and deliver them from a painful doom.

The word مِّنْ in يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ is to express part and fraction. It refers to those sins which are not forgiven even after professing faith. In my opinion, they refer to those grave sins which relate to the rights of one's fellow human beings. Compensating the aggrieved party is essential if such sins are to be forgiven. If this compensation and atonement was not done or its opportunity was lost, then it is the requirement of God's justice that the issue be raised between the two parties once again in the court of justice set up on the Day of Judgement. Only God knows what verdict will be passed there; however, this much is evident that if a person does not atone for such sins in spite of having the opportunity, then this is against the requisites of faith. If a person no longer has the opportunity for this atonement, then it can be expected that a person's sincere feeling of remorse, true repentance and those virtuous deeds which a person continues to do in his later life to atone for his sins will intercede for him before God.

Those who have regarded مِّنْ to be a surplus word have not given due attention to it. There is not a single surplus word in the Qur'ān. It should also be borne in mind that just as unfounded pessimism about God is not right, similarly unfounded optimism about Him can lead to trials. The balanced attitude in this matter lies between the states of hope and despair.

Though words وَمَنْ لَّا يُجِبْ دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَيْسَ لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءُ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ can be regarded to be additions from God, but in my opinion in the light of parallel verses of the Qur'ān, these words are from the jinn. In Sūrah al-Jinn, it is similarly said in their words:

وَاَنَّا ظَنَنَّآ اَنْ لَّنْ تُّعْجِزَ اللّٰهَ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَنْ نُّعْجِزَهٗ هَرَبًا. (۷۲:۱۲)

And that we have come to know that we cannot escape God's grasp by setting off to some place in this earth or beat him by running away somewhere in the heavens. (72:12)

The part وَلَيْسَ لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءُ relates to the Hereafter. In other words, just as they cannot escape God's grasp in this world, in a similar manner, they will have no one to

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help them against God in the next world.

Here a question arises: Are the jinn also the addressees of the Qur'ān in the same way as humankind and is Muḥammad (sws) a Messenger for them just as he is for humankind? If the answer to this question is in the negative, then what is the meaning of statement given by the jinn: يٰقَوْمَنَآ اَجِيْبُوْا دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِهٖ (O People of Ours! Answer the call of God's summoner and profess faith in him!). If the answer is in the affirmative, then has the practice of God regarding His messengers explained in detail in the Qur'ān been altered in the case of Muḥammad (sws)? As per this practice, messengers were members of the people they were sent to; they presented their message in their language and spent their lives among their people and launched a tremendous campaign to jolt, shake and awaken each section of their society and conclusively communicate the truth to them; if, even after this effort, their nation did not embrace faith, they declared their acquittal from it and migrated from the land. After this, divine punishment visited these people. Can it be claimed that the Prophet (sws) was able to discharge these obligations among the jinn, just as he was able to do so in the case of human beings? Obviously, this claim cannot be made. Moreover, the life of a messenger is the best example for his followers. Can the life of a human be a complete example for the jinn even though it is self-evident that for human beings, the life of an angel or jinn cannot be an example. Thus while responding to people who would ask why was a human being sent to them and why an angel was not sent, the Qur'ān replied that how can an angel be sent to guide human beings and had an angel been sent, he would have come in the form of a human being.

This also is a fact that when the jinn and humankind have been created from two conflicting substances, it is essential that their temperaments, dispositions and natures be different; similarly, their social and cultural needs as well as the directives and injunctions given be different. What can be regarded common to both are the beliefs of monotheism, the Hereafter and the basic principles of good and evil. Other affairs should nevertheless be different. Thus, if the Qur'ān can guide them, it can only be in matters of beliefs and moral principles. In other affairs of life, they would necessarily require that messengers should come to them from among them who are able to guide them keeping in view their natural wants, needs as well as various issues and circumstances they face so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them.

A little deliberation will show that what I have stated above also emanates from the Qur'ān. The impressions of the jinn referred to earlier on came into the knowledge of the Prophet (sws) through divine revelation and not directly. These precise impressions have been cited in great detail in Sūrah al-Jinn. There too it has been specified that these impressions of the jinn came to the knowledge of the Prophet (sws) through divine revelation. Thus the *sūrah* begins with the words: قُلْ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ اَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْاٰنًا عَجَبًا (۷۲: ۱) (Tell them: "It has been revealed to me that when a group of jinn listened to the Qur'ān, they said to their people: 'We have heard

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a Qur'ān wondrous,'" (72:1)). Had Muḥammad (sws) been a messenger towards the jinn also, he would have directly known these impressions. He should have fulfilled his responsibility of preaching with regard to the jinn the way he fulfilled it with regard to the people of Arabia; however, no such thing is evident from the Qur'ān. There are some narratives which say that a few delegations of the jinn came to visit the Prophet (sws) and he too went to visit some of them on their invitation; however, in the first place, there is such discrepancy in these narratives that they need to be evaluated with respect to their texts as well as chains of narration; in the second place, what at most can be derived from them is that at a few occasions the Prophet (sws) met with some delegations of the jinn or on some occasions he went over to them at their invitation. However, merely this cannot be regarded as enough to fulfill the responsibility of messengerhood towards them.

It is absolutely true that these jinn praised the Qur'ān and called upon their people to profess faith in it. I have indicated earlier that as far as the broader principles of religion are concerned, they are totally common between mankind and jinn; in fact, they are common between mankind and the angels as well; a further claim that can be made in this regard is that even the animal world, the material world and the physical world all adhere to them. For this reason, just as the songs and hymns of the Prophet David (sws) were chanted with him by birds and mountains, in a similar manner, when a party of the righteous jinn heard the Qur'ān, it was overwhelmed with praise for it. So moved were these jinn that they asked their people to profess faith in the Qur'ānic beliefs of monotheism and the Hereafter and to fear His torment. A look at this call given by the jinn earlier in this *sūrah* and also at its details given about it in Sūrah al-Jinn show that the call relates to all those aspects which are common between them and mankind – in fact all the universe. It does become evident from this that the basic message of the Qur'ān is the same for mankind and the jinn; however, it would not be right to say that Muḥammad (sws) is a messenger to the jinn in the same manner he is to mankind. The view of those who make this claim is against the practice of God relating to messengerhood mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān.

Here it is essential to point to a secondary discussion related to this verse.

Since in the previous verses it is only mentioned that believing jinn will be delivered from a painful torment and they are not given glad tidings of entering Paradise in explicit words, it is attributed to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah that he was not of the view that the righteous jinn would enter Paradise or he at least would be very cautious in saying so in explicit words.[37] I am unable to understand this caution exercised by the Imām. When the evil among the jinn will necessarily go to Hell, why should their righteous be deprived of Paradise? Some later scholars have substantiated this view of the Imām by saying that God does not have any obligation towards anyone. So if in spite of a person's piety and righteousness, He does not admit him into Paradise, then this would

37. See, for example: Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, 316.

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not be against justice. In my opinion, this argument is absolutely baseless. No one can impose an obligation on God; however, the rights and obligations He Himself has imposed on Him on the basis of His justice and mercy and has also promised His pious creatures in certain and definite words to fulfill them, why would He deprive the righteous – whether from mankind or the jinn – from them? In my opinion, if anything, the Imām would have said that the righteous jinn will not go to the same Paradise which is reserved for mankind. If this is what he has said, then this has a certain context. I will *inshā'Allāh* discuss this issue in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Jinn.

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَلَمْ یَعْیَ بِخَلْقِهِنَّ بِقٰدِرٍ عَلٰۤی اَنْ یُّحْیِۦَ الْمَوْتٰی ؕ بَلٰۤی اِنَّهٗ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ ﴿۳۳﴾[38]

At the end of the *sūrah*, this verse sounds a warning to the disbelievers. They are asked: "Have they not reflected on the fact that the God Who created the heavens and the earth without any bother is capable of raising the dead to life?" Precisely the same question has been posed by the Qur'ān at other instances before the rejecters of the Day of Judgement. Thus, for example, it was asked: اَفَعَیِینَا بِالْخَلْقِ الْاَوَّلِ. (۵۰:۱۵) (were We not able to create the first time? (50:15)). At other times, the question posed was to the effect: Speak up! Is it more difficult to create the heavens and the earth or to raise the dead back to life?

God then has answered the question Himself in the words: اِنَّهٗ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ. In other words, God, Who was not unable to create the heavens and the earth not only has the power to resurrect the dead, He has the power to do everything. I have indicated at various places in this exegesis that when the Qur'ān's addressees are so cornered that at times they are unable to answer a question posed, the Qur'ān itself puts forth the answer.

وَیَوْمَ یُعْرَضُ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَلَی النَّارِ ؕ اَلَیْسَ هٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ قَالُوْا بَلٰی وَرَبِّنَا ؕ قَالَ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾[39]

The portrayal of the warning sounded in the previous verses continues. They are told to always keep in mind the day when disbelievers will be presented before Hell and will be asked whether the event of the Day of Judgement has proven to be a reality or not. At that time, they will swear by their Lord that indeed it has proven to be a reality. After this confession from them, they will be told to taste torment in retribution of their disbelief. It should be kept in mind that the arguments which substantiate the Hereafter are so evident in the world within man and the one outside him that no sensible person can deny them. All those who have denied the Hereafter have not denied it because they have a legitimate reason for it; they have denied it merely because they were not

38. Have they not reflected that the God Who created the heavens and the earth and was not fatigued by their creation also has the power to raise the dead to life? Yes. He has power over all things.

39. And keep in mind the Day when the disbelievers are brought before Hell. They shall be asked: "Is this not real?" They will reply: "Yes, by our Lord! This is real." It shall be said to them: "Then taste the torment as a punishment of your disbelief."

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prepared to sacrifice their base desires! Obviously, people who in merely following their whims and desires have denied their own intellect, their nature and then all prophets and messengers do not deserve to be treated leniently.

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ اُولُوا الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَ لَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَّهُمْ ؕ كَاَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ۙ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوْۤا اِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ ؕ بَلٰغٌ ۚ فَهَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾[40]

Here, at the end, the Prophet (sws) is asked to show patience and perseverance. He is told that just as steadfast messengers before him braved all adversities with resolve and determination, and strongly adhered to their stance about the truth, in a similar manner, he too should strongly cling to his stance in spite of all the conspiracies worked up and harms inflicted by his enemies. In my opinion, the word مِن in مِنَ الرُّسُلِ is not to indicate part (*tab'īḍ*); it indicates the whole and is for delineation (*bayān*). All prophets of God faced trials one greater than the other and all of them without exception succeeded one hundred percent in these trials.

The words وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَّهُمْ imply that if these people are trying to irk the Prophet (sws) by asking him to hasten the punishment, then he should not get worried because of this haste demanded by them. As soon as they see the punishment before them, the respite which they have today will seem was only of a day or an hour of stay in this world.

The word بَلٰغٌ in بَلٰغٌ ۚ فَهَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ is the enunciative (*khabar*) of a suppressed inchoative (*mubtadā'*). In order to direct all attention on the *khabar*, the *mubtadā'* is suppressed here. The implication is that the Prophet's duty is to only deliver his warnings fully so that no one is left with an excuse to deny it. If after this, these people are destroyed, then it is their own responsibility. If these foolish people are asking to hasten the punishment, then let them do so. When it will come, who else but they will be routed by it.

On these lines, we come to the end of the exegesis of this *sūrah*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى فَضْلِهٖ وَاِحْسَانِهٖ (so all gratitude be to God for His blessing and favour).

Lahore,
7th April, 1980 AD
20th Jamādī al-Awwal 1400 AH

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40. Thus persevere the way other steadfast messengers persevered and do not seek to hurry for them. The day they behold what they are being threatened with they will feel as if they did not stay more than an hour of a day. Thus it is to communicate! Ultimately, death is surely for those who are the disobedient.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah Muḥammad (47)

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Sūrah Muḥammad

Central Theme of the *Sūrah* and the Nature of its Relationship with the Group

The Makkan *sūrahs* of this group ended on the previous *sūrah*: Sūrah al-Aḥqāf. The next three *sūrahs* are Madīnan. After Sūrah al-Aḥqāf, this *sūrah* begins without any introductory passage. It is as if it expresses the practical manifestation of the warning sounded to the disbelievers in the last verse of Sūrah al-Aḥqāf. Readers have seen that in the previous *sūrahs* it has been explained at length that the evil to support which the Quraysh and its allies are fighting has no basis neither in the world around man and that inside him nor in the established norms of sense and human nature. The history of the prophets as well as divine scriptures are also devoid of it. It is a tree which has shallow roots and has occupied space merely because there is no one to uproot it. Now in this and the next *sūrah*, it has been explained that God has created the means to uproot this evil and that the unassailable verdict of fate has been pronounced as per which all the efforts of the disbelievers which they have launched to stop people from going towards God will end up in vain. At the same time, the believers are given glad tidings that their efforts shall bear fruit not only in this world but also they alone will succeed in the Hereafter on the condition that they come forward to discharge their obligations with full resolve and determination. In this regard, a warning is sounded to the hypocrites who did lay claim to faith bur their sympathies were with the disbelievers. They are informed that if they did not wholly and fully support God and His Prophet (sws) by leaving aside hypocrisy, their fate will be the same as the one that is destined for the disbelievers and the idolaters.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-3): A declaration of the decision that since the disbelievers have spent all their efforts in following and supporting evil, hence they will end up in vain. On the other hand, since the believers have followed the truth that has come to them from their Lord and have also made many sacrifices in this regard, the Almighty will make their efforts bear fruit both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Verses (4-12): The believers are encouraged that if circumstances arise that they have to wage war against the disbelievers, they should not be over-awed by them. They are frail and baseless. They should be routed in war. They should be rendered so powerless that they are released from captivity as a favour to them by the Muslims or through ransom. Muslims should remember that God is sufficient to deal with them;

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He, however, wants to test them and that is why He is directing them to do so. If Muslims come forward to help God, God will help them and their enemies will be humiliated and trounced. History bears witness that before this too God destroyed nations which opposed the truth. The same fate will befall the enemies of the Muslims.

Verses (13-15): The pride and conceit which the Quraysh have on their power and might is totally baseless. History bears witness that the Almighty destroyed so many nations who were superior to them in all respects. This is a requisite of God's justice and wisdom. How can those who lead their lives in the light of reason and argument be equal to those who spend their lives while blindly following their desires? It is necessary that their fates be different. The fate of the former is Paradise which will offer various favours to them and that of the latter is Hell which will inflict them with a grievous fate. The atmosphere and surroundings of Paradise and Hell are then depicted.

Verses (16-19): A reference is made to the hidden enemy of the Muslims: the hypocrites. These people do apparently listen to what the Prophet (sws) says but understand nothing. Things which are instrumental in enhancing the faith and piety of the believers are instrumental in enhancing their hypocrisy. They await the time of judgement though after the coming of the Messenger its conditions have been fulfilled. If that time suddenly arrives, how will they have the chance to benefit from this counsel revealed by God? The Prophet (sws) is directed to seek God's forgiveness for himself and his companions – who knows the punishment could be hovering near.

Verses (20-31): The inner personality and clandestine conspiracies of the hypocrites are referred to: they are men who can only talk; initially, they enthusiastically demanded why the directive of *jihād* is not given to them; however, when this directive was given they were seized by deathly unconsciousness. These people have in fact turned away from religion and have connived with the enemies of Islam. They are assuring these enemies that they will support them. God is well aware of their hypocrisy and their conspiracies. If He wanted, He could have asked their foreheads to bear witness against them and everyone would have recognized them; However, He is granting them respite but will, nevertheless, put them through such tests which will highlight all the evils hidden in them.

Verses (32-38): This is the concluding part of the *sūrah* in which the subject with which it began is reminded of. After that, Muslims in general and the hypocrites in particular are warned to obey every directive of God and His Prophet (sws). If they show slackness in this, their good deeds will bear no fruit. There is no strength left in the disbelievers; so those who are trying to compromise with them are seeking refuge in a frail shelter. Muslims are urged and encouraged to prove equal to the task; they are destined to win; God is with them. They should not desist from spending in the way of God by being lured away by the pleasures of this world. This is not a non-profitable deal. God will reward each and every penny they spend. He is not asking

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Muslims to spend all their wealth so that they should evade this call. Had He given such a call, people who have hypocrisy and envy in their hearts would have been completely exposed. They should remember that he who is stingy with God is in fact stingy with his own self. God is not in need of anyone. He is self-sufficient. However, people need Him; He is testing them. If they fail in this exam, God will bring others in their place who will not prove to be worthless like them.

Section I: Verses (1-15)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اَلَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا وَ صَدُّوۡا عَنۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ اَضَلَّ اَعۡمَالَہُمۡ ﴿۱﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلٰی
مُحَمَّدٍ وَّ ہُوَ الۡحَقُّ مِنۡ رَّبِّہِمۡ ۙ کَفَّرَ عَنۡہُمۡ سَیِّاٰتِہِمۡ وَ اَصۡلَحَ بَالَہُمۡ ﴿۲﴾ ذٰلِکَ بِاَنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوا اتَّبَعُوا الۡبَاطِلَ وَ اَنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ
اٰمَنُوا اتَّبَعُوا الۡحَقَّ مِنۡ رَّبِّہِمۡ ؕ کَذٰلِکَ یَضۡرِبُ اللّٰہُ لِلنَّاسِ اَمۡثَالَہُمۡ ﴿۳﴾ فَاِذَا لَقِیۡتُمُ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا فَضَرۡبَ الرِّقَابِ ؕ حَتّٰۤی
اِذَاۤ اَثۡخَنۡتُمُوۡہُمۡ فَشُدُّوا الۡوَثَاقَ ۟ فَاِمَّا مَنًّۢا بَعۡدُ وَ اِمَّا فِدَآءً حَتّٰی تَضَعَ الۡحَرۡبُ اَوۡزَارَہَا ۚ ذٰلِکَ ۬ؕ وَ لَوۡ یَشَآءُ اللّٰہُ لَانۡتَصَرَ
مِنۡہُمۡ وَ لٰکِنۡ لِّیَبۡلُوَ بَعۡضَکُمۡ بِبَعۡضٍ ؕ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ قُتِلُوۡا فِیۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ فَلَنۡ یُّضِلَّ اَعۡمَالَہُمۡ ﴿۴﴾ سَیَہۡدِیۡہِمۡ وَ یُصۡلِحُ
بَالَہُمۡ ۚ﴿۵﴾ وَ یُدۡخِلُہُمُ الۡجَنَّۃَ عَرَّفَہَا لَہُمۡ ﴿۶﴾ یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِنۡ تَنۡصُرُوا اللّٰہَ یَنۡصُرۡکُمۡ وَ یُثَبِّتۡ اَقۡدَامَکُمۡ ﴿۷﴾ وَ
الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا فَتَعۡسًا لَّہُمۡ وَ اَضَلَّ اَعۡمَالَہُمۡ ﴿۸﴾ ذٰلِکَ بِاَنَّہُمۡ کَرِہُوۡا مَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰہُ فَاَحۡبَطَ اَعۡمَالَہُمۡ ﴿۹﴾ اَفَلَمۡ یَسِیۡرُوۡا فِی
الۡاَرۡضِ فَیَنۡظُرُوۡا کَیۡفَ کَانَ عَاقِبَۃُ الَّذِیۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِہِمۡ ؕ دَمَّرَ اللّٰہُ عَلَیۡہِمۡ ۟ وَ لِلۡکٰفِرِیۡنَ اَمۡثَالُہَا ﴿۱۰﴾ ذٰلِکَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰہَ مَوۡلَی
الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ اَنَّ الۡکٰفِرِیۡنَ لَا مَوۡلٰی لَہُمۡ ﴿۱۱﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ یُدۡخِلُ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِیۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِہَا
الۡاَنۡہٰرُ ؕ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا یَتَمَتَّعُوۡنَ وَ یَاۡکُلُوۡنَ کَمَا تَاۡکُلُ الۡاَنۡعَامُ وَ النَّارُ مَثۡوًی لَّہُمۡ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَ کَاَیِّنۡ مِّنۡ قَرۡیَۃٍ ہِیَ اَشَدُّ قُوَّۃً مِّنۡ
قَرۡیَتِکَ الَّتِیۡۤ اَخۡرَجَتۡکَ ۚ اَہۡلَکۡنٰہُمۡ فَلَا نَاصِرَ لَہُمۡ ﴿۱۳﴾ اَفَمَنۡ کَانَ عَلٰی بَیِّنَۃٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّہٖ کَمَنۡ زُیِّنَ لَہٗ سُوۡٓءُ عَمَلِہٖ وَ اتَّبَعُوۡۤا
اَہۡوَآءَہُمۡ ﴿۱۴﴾ مَثَلُ الۡجَنَّۃِ الَّتِیۡ وُعِدَ الۡمُتَّقُوۡنَ ؕ فِیۡہَاۤ اَنۡہٰرٌ مِّنۡ مَّآءٍ غَیۡرِ اٰسِنٍ ۚ وَ اَنۡہٰرٌ مِّنۡ لَّبَنٍ لَّمۡ یَتَغَیَّرۡ طَعۡمُہٗ ۚ وَ اَنۡہٰرٌ
مِّنۡ خَمۡرٍ لَّذَّۃٍ لِّلشّٰرِبِیۡنَ ۚ وَ اَنۡہٰرٌ مِّنۡ عَسَلٍ مُّصَفًّی ؕ وَ لَہُمۡ فِیۡہَا مِنۡ کُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ وَ مَغۡفِرَۃٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّہِمۡ ؕ کَمَنۡ ہُوَ خَالِدٌ فِی
النَّارِ وَ سُقُوۡا مَآءً حَمِیۡمًا فَقَطَّعَ اَمۡعَآءَہُمۡ ﴿۱۵﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

God has brought to nothing all the deeds of those who committed disbelief and stopped others from His path. As for those who professed faith and did good deeds and professed faith in what has been revealed to Muhammad – and which is the Truth from their Lord – God forgave them their sins and improved their state. This was

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because the disbelievers followed falsehood, while the believers followed the truth that came from their Lord. In this manner, God is citing examples for people. (1-3)

So, when you face the disbelievers strike off their heads until when you have routed them, bind them firmly. Then set them free as a favour or by taking ransom from them until war shall lay down its weapons. This is what you should do. And had God willed, He could have taken revenge from them Himself; but He directed you to do so that He might test one of you by the other. And those who have been slain in the cause of God, He will surely not allow their deeds to go waste. He will guide them to their destination and better their state and will admit them to the Paradise He has made known to them. (4-6)

Believers! If you help God, God will help you and firmly plant your feet. As for those who have disbelieved, they shall be destroyed and God brought their deeds to nothing. This is because they disliked what He revealed to them. So God brought their deeds to nothing. (7-9)

Have they never walked about in the land so that they could see the fate of those before them? God totally destroyed them. And before these disbelievers too are their examples. This is because God is the helper of the believers and the disbelievers have no helper. (10-11)

Indeed, God will admit those who embraced faith and did good deeds to gardens watered by running streams. And the disbelievers, they are indulging in pleasure and eating as cattle eat. Hell is their abode. (12)

How many settlements are there which were mightier than yours which turned you out? We destroyed them. Thus no one was able to help them. (13)

Can they who are on a clear evidence from their Lord become like those whose evil deeds have been made dear to them and they have followed their desires? Such is the Paradise which the righteous have been promised: therein shall flow rivers of water undefiled, and rivers of milk whose taste will never change and rivers of wine delectable to those who drink it and rivers of pure honey. And there will be fruits of all kinds and also forgiveness from their Lord. Will these people who receive these favours be like those who shall abide in Hell forever, and who will be made to drink boiling water; thus it will tear apart their bowels? (14-15)

Explanation

اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَضَلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ۝[1]

This *sūrah* has begun without any introductory verses right after the note of warning for the disbelievers on which Sūrah al-Aḥqāf ended – as if this *sūrah* is the practical manifestation of that warning. The verse says that the deeds of people who

1. God has brought to nothing all the deeds of those who committed disbelief and stopped others from His path.

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disbelieved and debarred people from the path of God have been rendered into nothingness by God. This obviously is a reference to the idolaters of Arabia. The details of this can be seen in verse 25 of Sūrah al-Fatḥ. The word اَعْمَالٌ (deeds) refers to the efforts undertaken by them to stop people from professing faith and doing good deeds. The word اِضْلَال used here has the same meaning as the word تَضْلِيْل used in Sūrah al-Fīl thus: اَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِيْ تَضْلِيْلٍ (٢:١٠٥) (did We not destroy their scheme? (105:2))

This topic will also be brought up in verse 4, 32 and 33 of this very *sūrah*.

Here, an important point worthy of note is that though this warning relates to the future because at the time of revelation of this *sūrah* the Quraysh were ruling Makkah yet it is stated in the past tense. I have been pointing out the reason for this at various places in this exegesis: it is as if what has been decided by God and what is bound to happen has already happened because no one can change the decisions of God. In order to express this certainty the promises and threats of the Almighty are mentioned in the Qur'ān in the past tense. This style is present in every language and its advantages are very evident.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَاٰمَنُوْا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ وَّهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۙ كَفَّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَاَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ ۝[2]

The manner and extent in which warning and threat is sounded to the disbelievers in the previous verse, in the same manner and extent in this verse, believers are given glad tidings of success in both this world and the next. The verse says that God has brushed away the sins of those who professed faith and also did righteous deeds and has set right all their circumstances.

Just as the past tense was employed to express certainty in the warning sounded to the disbelievers, in a similar manner the glad tidings for the believers are expressed in the past tense.

The words اٰمَنُوْا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ وَّ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ of this verse are especially worthy of consideration. It was not merely said that God will deal in this manner with those who professed faith and did righteous deeds; it was further specified that they were the ones who believed in what was revealed to Muḥammad (sws). It was specified still further that now this is the truth from God. This clarification was necessary because in those times a group had come into being which wanted a compromise between Islam and disbelief. Their point of view was that it is not right on the part of the Muslims to insist on their individual status and that they should be flexible and give some room to others as well. There was a group among the People of the Book which would say that they were believers and what difference would it make if they did not profess faith in

2. As for those who professed faith and did good deeds and professed faith in what has been revealed to Muhammad – and which is the Truth from their Lord – God forgave them their sins and improved their state.

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Muḥammad (sws). The Qur'ān has tried to refute such wrong ideologies in the previous *sūrahs* as well. Here also, the way it has specified the verse has negated this concept. It has emphasized that the only way to faith and guidance is the one to which Muḥammad (sws) is calling people. No other way is acceptable.

The word بَالَ in the expression وَ اَصۡلَحَ بَالَهُمۡ is a comprehensive one. It encompasses both outer and inner circumstances. Thus, this expression would mean that God will set right their inner and outer affairs as well as all those of this world and the next.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوا اتَّبَعُوا الۡبَاطِلَ وَاَنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّبَعُوا الۡحَقَّ مِنۡ رَّبِّهِمۡ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَضۡرِبُ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ اَمۡثَالَهُمۡ ﴿۳﴾[3]

This verse states the reason why the deeds of the disbelievers will end up in vain and why the believers will succeed in their efforts. The verse says that this will happen because the disbelievers followed the evil which Satan taught them, while the believers followed the truth which came to them from their Lord. There is no place for evil in their inner-selves and nature. Its example is that of a bush which, taking advantage of the lack of attention of a farmer, grows of its own accord in his land. If it is not uprooted, it finds firm roots in the ground, and if it is uprooted it can be easily done so. Since now the believers have got up to encounter the disbelievers, it is certain that it will be destroyed. At another place, the words of the Qur'ān are: جَآءَ الۡحَقُّ وَ زَهَقَ الۡبَاطِلُ ؕ اِنَّ الۡبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوۡقًا (۸۱:۱۷) (the truth has come and falsehood has been routed; indeed, falsehood was bound to be routed, (17:81)).

On the other hand, the believers have followed the truth which came to them from their Lord. Stability and strength is the very nature of the truth. The reason for this is that the Creator of this Universe is a truth and He has created this world as a truth. His real temperament is nurturing the truth and not evil and now that the truth has arrived it will destroy this evil which has wrapped itself around the truth like a creeper. It is evident from this that the real power and force is not in the means and resources but the truth itself. If the confrontation is between two evils, the decisive role is played by means and resources but if this is between truth and evil, then the decisive role played by the truth; means and resources will only play a secondary role.

The fate of the believers and disbelievers just spelled out was since at that moment in the form of prediction and had yet to materialize hence the words كَذٰلِكَ يَضۡرِبُ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ اَمۡثَالَهُمۡ refer to it as an example. The word لِلنَّاسِ (for people) here refers to these very believers and disbelievers just mentioned. The implication is that the Almighty has stated the parable of the fate of both these groups and soon this parable will practically manifest itself.

فَاِذَا لَقِيۡتُمُ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا فَضَرۡبَ الرِّقَابِ ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَاۤ اَثۡخَنۡتُمُوۡهُمۡ فَشُدُّوا الۡوَثَاقَ ۙ فَاِمَّا مَنًّۢا بَعۡدُ وَ اِمَّا فِدَآءً حَتّٰى تَضَعَ

3. This was because the disbelievers followed falsehood, while the believers followed the truth that came from their Lord. In this manner, God is citing examples for people.

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الْحَرْبُ اَوْزَارَهَا ۚ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَلَوْ يَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَانْتَصَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَا۟ بَعْضَكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ ۗ وَالَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَنْ يُّضِلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ۝[4]

Muslims are exhorted here that the disbelievers are devoid of the support of the truth; it is as if they are a body without a spinal chord; so when they face the disbelievers in battle, they should totally decimate them; God will make them their prey and an easy target for their swords. In Sūrah al-Anfāl, the words used are: فَاضْرِبُوْا فَوْقَ الْاَعْنَاقِ وَاضْرِبُوْا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ (۸:۱۲) (thus strike at their necks and strike off all the joints and the very tips of their fingers! (8:12)).

Consider next the expression: حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَثْخَنْتُمُوْهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ. The word اِثْخَان means to inflict heavy casualties and وَثَاقَ means "straps meant for fastening." The implication is that once after inflicting heavy casualties, the disbelievers are routed, Muslims should fasten tight the remaining ones; they will not be able to put up any resistance.

The words فَاِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَاِمَّا فِدَآءً حَتّٰى تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ اَوْزَارَهَا refer to the fact that after being tied up, if these captives are to be liberated by the Muslims, they should follow only two options: either as a favour or through ransom, and this dealing should continue with these disbelievers until the will to wage war turns cold in them and they lay down their weapons before the Muslims. At another place, the words used are: وَقَاتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُوْنَ الدِّيْنُ كُلُّهٗ لِلّٰهِ (۸:۳۹) (and wage war on them until persecution ceases in this land and God's religion shall reign supreme, (8:39)).

It should be kept in mind that as far as the idolaters of Arabia or in other words the Idolaters of the Ishmaelites are concerned, the Almighty has sent to them a Messenger from amongst themselves and conclusively communicated the truth to them through him. Thus like other non-Muslims they could not be treated with the concession of living as *dhimmīs* or *mu'āhids* in an Islamic state or that they be kept as slaves. They had two options only: either to embrace Islam or to face death. I have given the reasons for this in detail in my exegesis of Sūrah al-Tawbah. These captives could be released in ransom for a Muslim captive or in ransom consisting of cash or kind or as a favour without taking any sort of ransom. Similarly, if anyone among them wanted to seek refuge to reflect on his own attitude, he could be granted refuge. However, war was to continue with them as a group until the land of Arabia was cleansed of every speck of disbelief and polytheism. The differences of opinion which exist in this issue cause a lot of confusion. I have explained them in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Tawbah. Same is the

4. So, when you face the disbelievers strike off their heads until when you have routed them, bind them firmly. Then set them free as a favour or by taking ransom from them until war shall lay down its weapons. This is what you should do. And had God willed, He could have taken revenge from them Himself; but He directed you to do so that He might test one of you by the other. And those who have been slain in the cause of God, He will surely not allow their deeds to go waste.

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case with the Idolaters of the Ishmaelites under discussion. Other non-Muslims are not discussed here. In the opinion of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah,[5] the permission to free captives as a favour as in ransom had been revoked in the case of the idolaters of Arabia; they could either be executed or made slaves. In my view, this part of his view is correct that the concession with the Idolaters of Arabia was time barred and ended on the conquest of Makkah but his view that they can be made slaves is not correct in my view. The idolaters of Arabia could neither be made slaves nor *dhimmīs* nor *mu'āhids.*

In the opinion of Imām Shāfi'ī,[6] the ruler of the Muslims has four options regarding such captives and he can choose either keeping in view the welfare of the Muslims: he can have them executed, make them slaves, free them as favour, free them for ransom. In my opinion, this view of Imām Shāfi'ī is true as far as common non-Muslims are concerned; however, this is not true regarding the Idolaters of Arabia. They could not be made *dhimmīs* or slaves. Here, it is not appropriate to delve into the details of this issue. Those who want to study the details should read the chapter *Islāmī riyāsat mayn ghayr muslimu kay ḥuqūq* (Rights of Non-Muslims in an Islamic State) in my book, *Islāmī riyāsat* (Islamic State).[7]

In ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَلَوْ يَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَانْتَصَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَاْ بَعْضَكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ the word ذٰلِكَ is a substitute of a whole sentence: a few examples of this usage can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*. Its obvious meaning would be: "this is what you should do," or "this is what you should strive for," or "this is what you have been directed to do." The benefit of such brevity is that it encompasses all these details and at the same time incorporates emphasis in the sentence.

The words وَلَوْ يَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَانْتَصَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَاْ بَعْضَكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ imply that if God is asking the Muslims to wage war against them, then this does not mean that He is dependent on them or others for this task. Had He willed, He would have destroyed them Himself by sending a disaster from the heavens or from within the earth. Before them, many nations have been destroyed by His torment in the blink of any eye. He could have similarly routed them as well. However, He has asked the Muslims to wage war against these disbelievers to try both them and the disbelievers. As a result of this trial, the zeal and enthusiasm the disbelievers have to support evil will become apparent and the sincerity and commitment to die for the truth Muslims have will also become evident. It will also become apparent as to how many among the Muslims are sincere and righteous and how many have hypocritically joined their ranks for their vested interests.

Here the practice of God should be kept in mind that if very few profess faith in their messenger, He asks the messenger and his companions to migrate and all His rejecters

5. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Jaṣṣās, *Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol 2 (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 1405 AH), 270-271.

6. Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shafi 'ī, *Kitāb al-umm*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-ma'rifah,1393 AH), 260.

7. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Islāmī riyāsat*, 1sted. (Lahore: Dār al-tazkīr, 2006), 176-227.

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are destroyed through natural disasters; however, if the number professing faith in their messenger is sizeable, then they are directed to wage *jihād* and God avenges the enemy from through their hands. It was this latter situation that arose in case of Muḥammad (sws). Before him too, prophets and messengers waged *jihād.* The Almighty helped Moses and the Israelites against the Pharaoh through a sea-storm. After crossing the river, the Israelites had to wage many battles which became a means of their trial. They could not succeed in most trials for which they had to face punishments as well.

The words وَالَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَنْ يُّضِلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ say that people who are martyred in this *jihād* should rest assured that the Almighty will not let their efforts end up in vain; in fact, He will fully recompense them for their sacrifice. The words فَلَنْ يُّضِلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ have been said keeping in consideration the view of the hypocrites whose detailed mention is coming up. Since these people did not believe in the Hereafter, every sacrifice which did not produce immediate reward was to them a non-profitable deal. These words refute this view of theirs. Similarly, when it was said that people who are martyred in the way of God should not be regarded as dead; they are alive, then this too was said to negate their views.

The past tense instead of the future used in وَالَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا is to make these glad tidings extend to people who were martyred in the way of God in the past.

سَيَهْدِيْهِمْ وَيُصْلِحُ بَالَهُمْ ۚ﴿٥﴾ وَيُدْخِلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ عَرَّفَهَا لَهُمْ ﴿٦﴾[8]

What is stated earlier in the negative sense by the words: فَلَنْ يُّضِلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ is stated here in the positive sense so that what is said becomes clear and reinforced. The verse says that the Almighty will guide them and improve their circumstances. Guidance here refers to guiding and admitting them to the real destination: Paradise. The word "guidance" is used at many places in the Qur'ān in this meaning. Examples can be seen not only in the previous *sūrahs* but also in the coming ones. Concealed in the sentence يُصْلِحُ بَالَهُمْ are all the details of the successes and accomplishments of the companions of Paradise as mentioned in the Qur'ān. In fact, this sentence bears a very subtle reference to the achievements mentioned by the words: فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ (٣٢:١٧) (then no one knows what bliss has been kept hidden for him, (32:17)).

The words وَيُدْخِلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ represent the detail of the "guidance": God will admit them to Paradise. About this Paradise, it was said: عَرَّفَهَا لَهُمْ ie. God has fully identified Paradise for them. These details were required to dispel the notion that the promise of Paradise was a passing and ambiguous promise and nothing is known of its details. If the promise is ambiguous and details are not known, the weak party always remains uncertain about the reality. In order to shield His creatures from such speculations about Paradise, God has divulged all its details in the Qur'ān, and things which cannot

8. He will guide them to their destination and better their state and will admit them to the Paradise He has made known to them.

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be expressed because of the inability of words to state them are also referred so that people fully rest assured that what they are being promised in lieu of their lives and wealth is not something vague; on the contrary, all its details are known, and not only has God promised to grant all these things but has also committed to add to these favours. Although details about Paradise can be seen at various places in the Qur'ān; however, they are specially mentioned in this *sūrah* (verse 15). It should remain clear that the words عَرَّفَهَا لَهُمْ are not mentioned here as an attribute of Paradise; had this been the case the word Paradise would have occurred in the original Arabic as an undefined noun. On the contrary, its status is that of an independent sentence, and this status gives it the meaning that I have referred to earlier.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللّٰهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَ يُثَبِّتْ اَقْدَامَكُمْ ۝ وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَتَعْسًا لَّهُمْ وَ اَضَلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ۝ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَرِهُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاَحْبَطَ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ۝[9]

These verses encourage the Muslims: what they should do is to help and support the religion of God; if they come forward with resolve and determination, the rest of the task will be accomplished by their God. He will help them and implant their feet so firmly on the ground that no one will be able to dislodge them. In other words, God only wants them to take the first step in His way. If they do so, then the majesty of God will manifest itself. His help does not come to those who wait for it sitting in their houses; it comes to those who take the initiative and embark upon the job and then wait for God's help.

The words وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَتَعْسًا لَّهُمْ depict the fate of the disbelievers. For them is the curse of God. All their deeds will end up in vain. Whatever respite they have is to try them and to conclusively communicate the truth to them. If Muslims now gear up to take them to task, they will see that all their efforts will end up in vain. The sentence فَتَعْسًا لَّهُمْ expresses curse and its use in this manner is common in Arabic.

The words ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَرِهُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاَحْبَطَ اَعْمَالَهُمْ relate why these people have become hollow, worthless and accursed: they abhorred the very thing which the Almighty has revealed for their guidance and strongly adhered to religious innovations and erroneous concepts; the result was that the Almighty rendered fruitless all their deeds which they did in their own thinking for the cause of religion. This is a reference to those deeds which were pious but which ended up in vain because of the polytheistic creed they adhered to. The Qur'ān has referred to some of these deeds in Sūrah al-Tawbah. For example, managing the House of God and serving the needs of the pilgrims. The idolaters were very proud of these deeds. However, all these deeds

9. Believers! If you help God, God will help you and firmly plant your feet. As for those who have disbelieved, they shall be destroyed and God will bring their deeds to nothing. This is because they disliked what He revealed to them. So, God brought their deeds to nothing.

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proved to hold no weight before God. Only those deeds are acceptable to God which are done on the condition that people do them realizing that God is not in need of pious deeds so that in whatever way a person does them He accepts them as if a favour has been done to Him.

اَفَلَمۡ يَسِيۡرُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَيَنۡظُرُوۡا كَيۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ دَمَّرَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ۫ وَلِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ اَمۡثَالُهَا ﴿۱۰﴾[10]

This is an expression of sorrow on the thick-headedness and lack of vision of the Idolaters: have these people not roamed about in their land so that they could have observed the fate of nations before them. The Almighty totally routed them. It is evident from the style of the verse that these people did in fact move about in their land and continued to go out for various trade journeys; however, they never observed the cities in a manner that could have made them learn a lesson for they could very well see how settlements where great nations once lived were rendered into deserted lands. This is a reference to the nations whose anecdotes have been related earlier.

The words وَ لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ اَمۡثَالُهَا say that these nations should serve as an example to the Quraysh; in other words, if they reached this fate because of their disbelief and deliberate denial, there is no reason that the Quraysh too would not reach the same fate if they also adopted the same attitude. The law of God is the same for all. Readers may look up what I have written while earlier explaining the words: كَذٰلِكَ يَضۡرِبُ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ اَمۡثَالَهُمۡ of verse 3.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَوۡلَى الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَاَنَّ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ لَا مَوۡلٰى لَهُمۡ ﴿۱۱﴾[11]

The implication of this verse is that the real helper and supporter of this universe is God and He is with the believers. So what power can the disbelievers who have no supporters wield? Those whom they are regarding to be their helpers will be of no avail to them, neither in this world nor in the next. In verse 3 earlier, this subject is discussed in a different style. That too should be kept in consideration.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدۡخِلُ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا يَتَمَتَّعُوۡنَ وَيَاۡكُلُوۡنَ كَمَا تَاۡكُلُ الۡاَنۡعَامُ وَالنَّارُ مَثۡوًى لَّهُمۡ ﴿۱۲﴾[12]

This verse further explains how the deeds of the believers will bear fruit and the

10. Have they never walked about in the land so that they could see the fate of those before them? God totally destroyed them. And before these disbelievers too are their examples.

11. This is because God is the protector of the believers and the disbelievers have no protector.

12. Indeed, God will admit those who embraced faith and did good deeds to gardens watered by running streams. And the disbelievers, they are indulging in pleasure and eating as cattle eat. Hell is their abode.

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deeds of the disbelievers will end up in vain. It also explains why these disbelievers dominantly roam about in this world if their deeds have no worth. The verse says that the Almighty will admit the believers in Paradise watered with streams. As far as these disbelievers are concerned, their abode is Hell. The respite they have been given in this world to make hey should not be regarded by them as something positive for themselves. Their enjoyment and merriment is like that of animals. They are totally foolish and silly and totally unaware of the obligations which God's favours require of them. So they can benefit from these favours for a few days. However, these favours will lead them to destruction and their final abode is Hell.

وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ هِيَ اَشَدُّ قُوَّةً مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكَ الَّتِيْٓ اَخْرَجَتْكَ ۚ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ فَلَا نَاصِرَ لَهُمْ ﴿١٣﴾[13]

No one should remain under the misconception that if today the Quraysh wield power and ascendancy and that if they were able to turn out the Prophet (sws) and his companions from Makkah, then who can conquer such powerful people? The verse says that there were many nations greater in grandeur and majesty than that of the Quraysh but God destroyed them and no one was able to help them. This is a reference to the 'Ād and Thamūd etc whose anecdotes have been cited in the previous *sūrahs* and whose grandeur and majesty the Quraysh fully acknowledged. The expression فَلَا نَاصِرَ لَهُمْ not only refutes the worldly help they trusted and felt pride in but also the help of their self-claimed deities which they thought would help them against God.

اَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ كَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهٗ سُوْٓءُ عَمَلِهٖ وَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ﴿١٤﴾[14]

The previous verses portray their worldly fate corroborated through historical examples. This verse portrays their fate in the Hereafter. Human intellect and nature are made to bear witness to it. The verse says that would people who are on a radiant sign from God and walk in its light be equal to those whose misdeeds have been endeared to them and who follow their whims? The implication is that this can never be. This is something absolutely against human intellect and nature. If this happens, then that would mean that this world is meaningless and purposeless and its Creator has created it for His recreation.

The word بَيِّنَة has been explained in detail in Sūrah Yūnus. God has created a conclusive sign within man's nature and has further reinforced it by the radiance of His revelations. Both these combine to make a person's inner-self to be نُوْرٌ عَلٰى نُوْرٌ (light upon light), as referred to by Sūrah al-Nūr. The brilliance of this light necessarily

13. How many settlements are there which were mightier than yours which turned you out? We destroyed them. Thus no one was able to help them.

14. Can they who are on a clear evidence from their Lord become like those whose evil deeds have been made dear to them and they have followed their desires?

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manifests in his outer-self. On the contrary, a person who blows out the candle found in his nature also deprives himself from the light provided by divine revelations. The result is that both his inner-self and outer-self are engulfed in pitch darkness. In other words, the verse says that how can the fate of two groups be equal in whose inner and outer selves there is a pronounced difference?

If this verse is deliberated upon, a person can see that while mentioning the believers only their inner-selves are referred to; their outer-selves are not; however, in case of the disbelievers, the situation is the opposite. When the voids are filled in the light of this parallel style whose examples I have been giving in this exegesis only then the eloquence of the whole sentence will become evident.

In the verse, for مَثَلُ the antecedents and verbs are used both in the singular form and the plural form because it can be equally used for the feminine and masculine genders as well as for singular nouns and plural ones.

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِیْ وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ ؕ فِیْهَاۤ اَنْهٰرٌ مِّنْ مَّآءٍ غَیْرِ اٰسِنٍ ۚ وَ اَنْهٰرٌ مِّنْ لَّبَنٍ لَّمْ یَتَغَیَّرْ طَعْمُهٗ ۚ وَ اَنْهٰرٌ مِّنْ خَمْرٍ لَّذَّةٍ لِّلشّٰرِبِیْنَ ۚ۬ وَ اَنْهٰرٌ مِّنْ عَسَلٍ مُّصَفًّى ؕ وَ لَهُمْ فِیْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ وَ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ؕ كَمَنْ هُوَ خَالِدٌ فِی النَّارِ وَ سُقُوْا مَآءً حَمِیْمًا فَقَطَّعَ اَمْعَآءَهُمْ ﴿۱۵﴾[15]

The implication of this verse is that when it is against the norms of sense and human nature that these two groups should reach the same fate, then it is essential that God bless with His mercy the one who led its life in the light of its pure nature and that of divine guidance, and the one who led its life in the light of whims and desires be accordingly punished. Thus both will meet the same fate. God has promised Paradise to His pious people whose parable is thus: it shall have pure and untainted water-canals and springs of milk whose taste will never change; it will also have streams of delicious wine which will not intoxicate its drinkers; similarly, it will have streams of unadulterated honey. Moreover, the dwellers of Paradise will also be given fruits of various kinds and will also be given glad tidings of permanent forgiveness from their Lord. On the other hand, the other group will always dwell in Hell and their very first entertainment will be of such seething water which will slice open their intestines.

Deliberation on this verse will show that the pure and impeccable nature of the favours of Paradise is specially highlighted. This is because the fountainhead of all favours is Paradise; however, when we receive them in this world, then since they pass

15. Such is the Paradise which the righteous have been promised: therein shall flow rivers of water undefiled, and rivers of milk whose taste will never change and rivers of wine delectable to those who drink it and rivers of pure honey. And there will be fruits of all kinds and also forgiveness from their Lord. Will these people who receive these favours be like those who shall abide in Hell forever, and who will be made to drink boiling water; thus it will tear apart their bowels?

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through so many phases and stages, their form changes significantly, and their appearance is also totally distorted. Take, for example, water which is the most common thing. It reaches us after so many stages including the atmosphere, clouds, winds, seas, canals, streams and layers of the earth. Obviously, it is affected by every stage because of which its real taste undergoes a lot of change from its original one found in Paradise.

Similarly, take the example of milk. The stages through which it reaches us are mentioned in the Qur'ān thus: مِنۢ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَّدَمٍ (٦٦:١٦) (between the bowels and the blood-streams, (16:66)). One can conclude that how can a favour of Paradise remain in its original form and shape if it reached us after so many steps. For this reason, the milk and honey of this world are as different and distanced from the milk and honey of Paradise as the earth and sky are. We can have a vague idea of the favours of Paradise by viewing the favours of this world and God has blessed us with these favours so that we can have some idea of the real favours through these metaphorical ones, but the relationship between the two is that of reality and metaphor. We should not ignore this relationship.

If one deeply deliberates on the relationship of this verse with verse 14, it will become evident that the Almighty will bestow these favours on those of His creatures who keep their nature – which the Almighty has called: فِطْرَتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا (٣٠:٣٠) (adhere to the nature that God created for mankind to embrace, (30:30)) – cleansed from all kinds of evil and return to their Lord with a sound heart. As far as those people are concerned who become slaves to their desires by distorting their natures, they will have no share in these favours. Whatever benefit they could have from them, they did in this world. In the Hereafter, punishment awaits them – punishment which is the obvious consequence of distorting one's nature.

After understanding the meaning of the verse, let us take a look at its words and at the structure of its sentences. The word آسِنٌ is used as an adjective for water whose colour and taste has changed. It should be kept in mind that the disturbance caused in the human body by contaminated water has no remedy.

About milk, it is said: لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهٗ (its taste will not change). This refers to that change in taste which results because of its contamination. Since milk is a natural means of sustenance, any disorder in it will produce disorder.

The attribute لَّذَّةٍ of خَمْرٍ has an exaggeration and hyperbole in it. It is like saying زَيْدٌ عَدْلٌ (Zayd is justice). The implied meaning is that the wine will be at the pinnacle of its taste. Those who drink it will neither feel it to be bitter, unpleasant and intoxicating nor will it make them lose their senses.

The adjective مُّصَفًّى of عَسَلٌ shows that the honey found in this world is nevertheless produced by the bees and which cannot be devoid of their contamination they can cause. The honey of Paradise would be from its real source. No one would be able to censure it in any way.

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The words وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ at the end refer to the greatest favour of Paradise. This is because it is the forgiveness of God which will be the reason for all the favours and will open the way to the higher levels of Paradise.

Words to the effect أَفَمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ مَثَلُ هٰذِهِ الجَنَّةِ are suppressed before كَمَنْ هُوَ خَالِدٌ فِي النَّارِ because of linguistic indications. Such suppressions are common in interrogative and conditional sentences. Examples can be seen in the exegesis of earlier *sūrahs*.

The words مَاءً حَمِيْمًا are mentioned as نُزُلٌ or the very first entertainment for the companions of Hell. The Qur'ān has mentioned at a number of places that the very first entertainment of the companions of Hell will be boiling water; after that, all kinds of torments will engulf them.

Section II: Verses (16-38)

The succeeding verses are a comment on the attitude of the hypocrites and this subject continues right to the end of the *sūrah*. They are mentioned here with the same reference as they are mentioned in Sūrah al-Nisā', Sūrah al-Mā'idah, Sūrah al-Anfāl and Sūrah al-Tawbah as well as other *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān. When Muslims were asked to undertake a big campaign, it became essential that a group lurking among them as their hidden enemy be exposed whose weaknesses as well as connivances could become a danger for the Muslims in the coming phases. This subject is divided into three parts.

First, the Prophet (sws) is informed that there is a group among the Muslims who does listen to what he says, yet understands nothing. These people are waiting for a sign of punishment in order to be convinced of what he is saying; they do not know that the advent of a messenger is a forerunner to punishment for people who do not profess faith in him.

Next, their cowardice is exposed: they zealously express from their tongues their readiness for *jihād*; however, now when they have been directed in explicit terms to undertake it, they are engulfed with the fear of death. These people have in fact turned away from religion and have their association with the enemies of God. God has now decided that He will reveal their weakness and hypocrisy through trials and tests.

Lastly, what is discussed at the beginning of the *sūrah* is brought up again and Muslims in general and hypocrites in particular are told that they should not try to find support of people who are destined to be doomed; now instead of thinking of ways and means to strike a compromise with them, they should get ready to struggle for the supremacy of religion. God will grant them success. If they turn away from God by being caught in the love of this world, God has no concern for them. He will bring forth others in their place who will not be cowards and hypocrites like them.

Readers may now proceed to the read these verses.

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Text and Translation

وَ مِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّسۡتَمِعُ اِلَيۡكَ ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا خَرَجُوۡا مِنۡ عِنۡدِكَ قَالُوۡا لِلَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡعِلۡمَ مَاذَا قَالَ اٰنِفًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ
طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ وَ اتَّبَعُوۡۤا اَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ ﴿۱۶﴾ وَ الَّذِيۡنَ اهۡتَدَوۡا زَادَهُمۡ هُدًى وَّ اٰتٰىهُمۡ تَقۡوٰىهُمۡ ﴿۱۷﴾ فَهَلۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ اِلَّا
السَّاعَةَ اَنۡ تَاۡتِيَهُمۡ بَغۡتَةً ۚ فَقَدۡ جَآءَ اَشۡرَاطُهَا ۚ فَاَنّٰى لَهُمۡ اِذَا جَآءَتۡهُمۡ ذِكۡرٰىهُمۡ ﴿۱۸﴾ فَاعۡلَمۡ اَنَّهٗ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَ اسۡتَغۡفِرۡ
لِذَنۡۢبِكَ وَ لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ وَ الۡمُؤۡمِنٰتِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمۡ وَ مَثۡوٰىكُمۡ ﴿۱۹﴾ وَ يَقُوۡلُ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَوۡلَا نُزِّلَتۡ سُوۡرَةٌ ۚ فَاِذَاۤ
اُنۡزِلَتۡ سُوۡرَةٌ مُّحۡكَمَةٌ وَّ ذُكِرَ فِيۡهَا الۡقِتَالُ ۙ رَاَيۡتَ الَّذِيۡنَ فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ مَّرَضٌ يَّنۡظُرُوۡنَ اِلَيۡكَ نَظَرَ الۡمَغۡشِىِّ عَلَيۡهِ مِنَ الۡمَوۡتِ ؕ
فَاَوۡلٰى لَهُمۡ ﴿۲۰﴾ طَاعَةٌ وَّ قَوۡلٌ مَّعۡرُوۡفٌ ؕ فَاِذَا عَزَمَ الۡاَمۡرُ ۟ فَلَوۡ صَدَقُوا اللّٰهَ لَكَانَ خَيۡرًا لَّهُمۡ ﴿۲۱﴾ فَهَلۡ عَسَيۡتُمۡ اِنۡ تَوَلَّيۡتُمۡ اَنۡ
تُفۡسِدُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَ تُقَطِّعُوۡۤا اَرۡحَامَكُمۡ ﴿۲۲﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فَاَصَمَّهُمۡ وَ اَعۡمٰۤى اَبۡصَارَهُمۡ ﴿۲۳﴾ اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوۡنَ
الۡقُرۡاٰنَ اَمۡ عَلٰى قُلُوۡبٍ اَقۡفَالُهَا ﴿۲۴﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ ارۡتَدُّوۡا عَلٰۤى اَدۡبَارِهِمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الۡهُدَى ۙ الشَّيۡطٰنُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمۡ ؕ
وَ اَمۡلٰى لَهُمۡ ﴿۲۵﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ قَالُوۡا لِلَّذِيۡنَ كَرِهُوۡا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ سَنُطِيۡعُكُمۡ فِىۡ بَعۡضِ الۡاَمۡرِ ۖ وَ اللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ اِسۡرَارَهُمۡ ﴿۲۶﴾
فَكَيۡفَ اِذَا تَوَفَّتۡهُمُ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَضۡرِبُوۡنَ وُجُوۡهَهُمۡ وَ اَدۡبَارَهُمۡ ﴿۲۷﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمُ اتَّبَعُوۡا مَاۤ اَسۡخَطَ اللّٰهَ وَ كَرِهُوۡا رِضۡوَانَهٗ
فَاَحۡبَطَ اَعۡمَالَهُمۡ ﴿۲۸﴾ اَمۡ حَسِبَ الَّذِيۡنَ فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ مَّرَضٌ اَنۡ لَّنۡ يُّخۡرِجَ اللّٰهُ اَضۡغَانَهُمۡ ﴿۲۹﴾ وَ لَوۡ نَشَآءُ لَاَرَيۡنٰكَهُمۡ
فَلَعَرَفۡتَهُمۡ بِسِيۡمٰهُمۡ ؕ وَ لَتَعۡرِفَنَّهُمۡ فِىۡ لَحۡنِ الۡقَوۡلِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ اَعۡمَالَكُمۡ ﴿۳۰﴾ وَ لَنَبۡلُوَنَّكُمۡ حَتّٰى نَعۡلَمَ الۡمُجٰهِدِيۡنَ مِنۡكُمۡ وَ
الصّٰبِرِيۡنَ ۙ وَ نَبۡلُوَا۟ اَخۡبَارَكُمۡ ﴿۳۱﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَ صَدُّوۡا عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَ شَآقُّوا الرَّسُوۡلَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الۡهُدٰى ۙ
لَنۡ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ شَيۡـًٔا ؕ وَ سَيُحۡبِطُ اَعۡمَالَهُمۡ ﴿۳۲﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَطِيۡعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيۡعُوا الرَّسُوۡلَ وَ لَا تُبۡطِلُوۡۤا اَعۡمَالَكُمۡ ﴿۳۳﴾
اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَ صَدُّوۡا عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوۡا وَ هُمۡ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنۡ يَّغۡفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمۡ ﴿۳۴﴾ فَلَا تَهِنُوۡا وَ تَدۡعُوۡۤا اِلَى السَّلۡمِ ۖ وَ اَنۡتُمُ
الۡاَعۡلَوۡنَ ۚ وَ اللّٰهُ مَعَكُمۡ وَ لَنۡ يَّتِرَكُمۡ اَعۡمَالَكُمۡ ﴿۳۵﴾ اِنَّمَا الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا لَعِبٌ وَّ لَهۡوٌ ؕ وَ اِنۡ تُؤۡمِنُوۡا وَ تَتَّقُوۡا يُؤۡتِكُمۡ اُجُوۡرَكُمۡ وَ لَا
يَسۡـَٔلۡكُمۡ اَمۡوَالَكُمۡ ﴿۳۶﴾ اِنۡ يَّسۡـَٔلۡكُمُوۡهَا فَيُحۡفِكُمۡ تَبۡخَلُوۡا وَ يُخۡرِجۡ اَضۡغَانَكُمۡ ﴿۳۷﴾ هٰۤاَنۡتُمۡ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ تُدۡعَوۡنَ لِتُنۡفِقُوۡا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ
اللّٰهِ ۚ فَمِنۡكُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّبۡخَلُ ۚ وَ مَنۡ يَّبۡخَلۡ فَاِنَّمَا يَبۡخَلُ عَنۡ نَّفۡسِهٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ الۡغَنِىُّ وَ اَنۡتُمُ الۡفُقَرَآءُ ۚ وَ اِنۡ تَتَوَلَّوۡا يَسۡتَبۡدِلۡ قَوۡمًا
غَيۡرَكُمۡ ۙ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُوۡنُوۡۤا اَمۡثَالَكُمۡ ﴿۳۸﴾

And some of them indeed listen to you, but as soon as they leave your presence, they ask those endowed with knowledge: "What did he just say?" It is these people whose hearts have been sealed by God, and who have followed their base desires. And as for those who follow the path of guidance, God increased their guidance and granted them their share of piety. (16-17)

These people are only waiting for the Hour of Doom to suddenly overtake them? So, they should keep in mind that its portents have already come. So, when that Hour

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comes, what chance will they have of being reminded? So, you should know that there is no deity but God. And seek forgiveness for the blemishes of believing men and believing women. And God knows the places where you come and go and the places where you reside. (18-19)

And those who have professed faith say: "Why is not a *sūrah* [regarding *jīhad*] revealed!" But when a clear *sūrah* was revealed and *jihād* was also mentioned in it, you see those inflicted with a malady in their hearts staring at you as though they are fainting away for fear of death. So, pity be on them! For them, the best attitude was obedience and the customary word. So, when the matter had been decided with certainty, then if they had been true to God, it would have been better for them. Therefore, if you turned away, what else is expected from you than spreading disorder in the land and severing blood relationships. It is these people who have been cursed by God; thus He made their ears dumb and eyes blind. Do they not ponder on the Qur'ān or are there locks upon their hearts? Indeed, people who turned away once God's guidance was revealed to them were deceived by Satan and God gave them respite. This happened because they said to those who detested what was revealed by God. They said: "We shall follow you in some affairs." And God knows this secret of theirs. So, what will happen when the angels will claim their souls, striking their faces and their backs? This will be because they followed what incurred the wrath of God and hated what pleased Him. So, God brought their deeds to nothing. (20-28)

Do these people in whose hearts is a malady think that God will never reveal their malice? And if We pleased, We would have them pointed out to you and you would recognize them by their looks. And you will surely know them from their hesitant words. And God has knowledge of your deeds. (29-30)

And We shall definitely put you to test to distinguish the valiant and the resolute among you and test your circumstances. Those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God and opposed the Messenger after they had been clearly guided shall in no way harm God. And God will bring their deeds to nothing. (31-32)

Believers! Obey God and obey the Messenger, and do not let your labours come to nothing. Indeed, those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God and died in this state, God shall never forgive them. So do not be feeble and call for a compromise and you will remain dominant and God is on your side and will not show any dishonesty with you in your deeds. (33-35)

The life of this world is but a sport and entertainment. And if you profess faith and be pious, God will reward you and will not ask for all your wealth. And if He demands and demands all, you would show stinginess and this would reveal your malice. Listen up! You are those who when called to spend for the cause of God, there are some among you are stingy. And he who is stingy should remember that he is stingy to himself. God does not need you, but you need Him. And if you turn away, He will replace you by others; then they shall not be like yourselves. (36-38)

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Explanation

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَمِعُ اِلَيْكَ ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا خَرَجُوْا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قَالُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ مَاذَا قَالَ اٰنِفًا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ الَّذِيْنَ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَاۗءَهُمْ ﴿١٦﴾[16]

The Prophet (sws) is asked to beware of people who apparently were with the Muslims, yet all their sympathies were with the enemies of Islam. The need for this arose because Muslims could be harmed the most by these people in the campaign they had been asked to undertake in the previous verses. The verse says that there is group among them who tries to hear what the Prophet (sws) says, yet understands nothing. For when these people disperse from his presence, they ask from other knowledgeable people of the gathering what the Prophet (sws) had said.

The antecedent of the pronoun in مِنْهُمْ is those referred to earlier by the words كَرِهُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ. The implication is that one group does not even come near the Prophet (sws) because of abhorrence for what has been revealed by God, and another one among them comes to him but not to listen and to understand; only to display its hypocrisy.

By the question مَاذَا قَالَ اٰنِفًا they want to give the impression to the people that as far as hearing the Prophet (sws) is concerned, they have fully heard what he has said and are also ready to follow it with the readiness of head and heart; however, as yet they have not been able to understand what the Prophet (sws) wants to convey to them. In this manner, they would try to hide their hypocrisy.

The second impression that they wanted to give was that what the Prophet (sws) was conversing about are not things which should be believed into without deliberation; they need deep deliberation and reflection. In other words, by this comment they would insinuate agony for the Muslims who would believe and show conviction in everything related to them by the Prophet (sws); their comment implied that Muslims were accepting what the Prophet (sws) is telling them because they are simpletons and that they in spite of listening very intently to him are unable to understand what he says. It may be kept in mind that this attitude is very effective in undermining the best of words said. For a similar objective, when a *sūrah* would be revealed and the Prophet (sws) would recite it to these hypocrites, at times, they would sarcastically comment after leaving the Prophet's presence: Speak up! Whose faith has been revived by this *sūrah*? In Sūrah al-Tawbah, this prank of theirs is mentioned in the following words:

وَاِذَا مَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ اَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هٰذِهٖٓ اِيْمَانًا ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَزَادَتْهُمْ اِيْمَانًا وَّهُمْ

16. And some of them indeed listen to you, but as soon as they leave your presence, they ask those endowed with knowledge: "What did he just say?" It is these people whose hearts have been sealed by God, and who have followed their base desires.

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يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ. وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا اِلٰى رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ. (٩: ١٢٤-١٢٥)

And whenever a *sūrah* is revealed, some of them ask: "Whose faith will this increase?" It will surely increase the believers' faith and give them joy. As for those whose hearts are tainted, it will add uncleanness to their uncleanness, so that they shall die while still in disbelief. (9:124-125)

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَ اتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ say that it is these people whose hearts have been sealed by the Almighty and they have followed their base desires. This is a reference to verse 14 كَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهٗ سُوْٓءُ عَمَلِهٖ وَ اتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ that their misdeeds have been endeared to them and they have become the followers of their base desires; so they will now face the same fate as has been destined for such people. Such people deprive themselves of the light of vision which the Almighty has innately blessed man with and for this reason, they remain deprived of the light of divine revelation and their hearts are sealed because of their misdeeds.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَّاٰتٰىهُمْ تَقْوٰىهُمْ ﴿١٧﴾[17]

This is the same subject as is discussed in the afore-mentioned verse of Sūrah al-Tawbah: God, through His companionship of His Prophet (sws), increased such people in guidance as had kept intact the innate light found in their nature and also protected it. He blessed the quality of virtue found in them in accordance with their ability and desire to attain it. As far as those people are concerned who nurtured hypocrisy in them, whatever innate ability they had was also confiscated from them.

فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا السَّاعَةَ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءَ اَشْرَاطُهَا ۚ فَاَنّٰى لَهُمْ اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ ذِكْرٰىهُمْ ﴿١٨﴾[18]

The verse says that if they are not being able to understand what the Prophet (sws) is telling them, then this only means that these people are only waiting for the hour of judgement that it suddenly overtake them. The word "hour" can refer to both the Day of Judgement and as well as to the decisive punishment which necessarily visits a messenger's immediate addressees if they intentionally reject him. The messengers of God inform their people of both types of punishments and the one is related to the other as a prelude is to its culmination. The implication is that God was gracious enough to them to warn them of the danger by sending a messenger to them and also revealed His book to them so that when the hour of judgement arrives, they are not able

17. And as for those who follow the path of guidance, God increased their guidance and granted them their share of piety.

18. These people are only waiting for the Hour of Doom to suddenly overtake them? So, they should keep in mind that its portents have already come. So, when that Hour comes, what chance will they have of being reminded?

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to say that no warner came to them. However, they are deliberately trying to pose as unaware to this; if they are posing so, then let them be, for God sends His messenger to convey the truth to the extent that no one is left with an excuse to deny it. If they do not open their ears through his reminders, then the final thing is punishment and the Day of Judgement; now they will face them; if they are not duly honouring these beforehand reminders, then this only means that they want that it suddenly come upon them.

The words فَقَدْ جَآءَ اَشْرَاطُهَا imply that if they are waiting for the punishment to arrive, then they should know that its signs have already manifested themselves. This is a reference to the practice of God explained in the previous *sūrahs*: the Almighty does not send His decisive punishment to a people unless He sends His messenger to their central city. This has now happened. God is now observing what attitude people are adopting towards their messenger. Whatever these people have done till now deserves punishment; however, God is giving them respite; if anyone wants to mend his ways, he has this opportunity.

If even now people do not take heed, then the law of God will manifest itself: God will separate His pious people and will destroy those adamant on rebelliousness and anarchy. The signs of this fate are manifesting themselves now both in the world within men and that around them; in the time to come, they will become even more discernable. The time will come when the court of justice will be set up in this world for both the believers and the disbelievers; this lesser court of justice will become a prelude to the greater court of justice that will be set up in the Hereafter. This is what will happen after the advent of the last Messenger and his conclusive communication of the truth. Thus, in certain narratives, the Prophet (sws) has referred to this by raising his two fingers; he is reported to have said that just as these two fingers are adjacent to one another, in a similar manner his advent and the Day of Judgement are very close to one another.[19]

In the sentence, فَاَنّٰى لَهُمْ اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ ذِكْرٰىهُمْ the subject of the verb جَاءتْ is السَّاعَةَ which is mentioned earlier. In other words, if these people are waiting for the judgement hour to profess faith in the Messenger, then whether that hour manifests in the form of punishment or the Day of Judgement, in both cases what chance will they have to heed the reminder? The only time to benefit from this reminder is before their arrival. Once it arrives, their professing faith will be absolutely useless.

فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْۢبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوٰىكُمْ ﴿۱۹﴾[20]

This is a reference to the fact that now when the hour of judgement is about to

19. See, for example: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, 1881, (no. 4652).

20. So, you should know that there is no deity but God. And seek forgiveness for the blemishes of believing men and believing women. And God knows the places where you come and go and the places where you reside.

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arrive, they should fully comprehend that there is no god but God. People who have no fear of God on the basis of their alleged deities will come to fully realize by that time that no one is there to help them against God.

The words وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْۢبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ direct the Prophet (sws) to prepare to protect himself from calamities of that day: people who have no fear of them should be left to themselves; he should keep asking the forgiveness of God for his blemishes and for that of the believers.

This address to the Prophet (sws) is in his capacity of the representative and intercessor of his people. The Messenger of God continuously while bearing the burden of all his associates whether men or women keeps asking for God's forgiveness for himself and for them. He was directed to do so with more diligence so that when the hour of judgement comes, the believers are protected from its calamities.

Here the ascription of sin to the Prophet (sws) in the first place is as a representative of the whole *ummah*, as referred to earlier and not directly towards him. In the second place, the blemishes of the prophets of God do not emanate from base desires; their blemishes emanate from being over zealous for the cause of truth. I have already explained this at an appropriate place in this exegesis. Such excesses in themselves are not sins; however, since the prophets and messengers of God are standards of truth and falsehood, the Almighty checks them even for such blemishes and reforms them.

The word مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ can be a verbal noun and can also be an adverb of place. I have interpreted it in the latter sense because it is used in contrast with مَثْوٰى. It would thus refer to a place where people come and go.

This is an assurance of protection sounded to the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims: if they continue to seek forgiveness from God, He will protect them wherever they are; He knows full well the places they frequent and as well as their abodes. There is no fear for them to encounter torment.

وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ ۚ فَاِذَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ مُّحْكَمَةٌ وَّذُكِرَ فِيْهَا الْقِتَالُ ۙ رَاَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يَّنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ نَظَرَ الْمَغْشِيِّ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ۭ فَاَوْلٰى لَهُمْ ۝[21]

This is a reference to the attitude adopted by the hypocrites when they heard the clear directive of *jīhad* as mentioned in verse four of this *sūrah.* It is said that first these people who vehemently bluff their claim to faith would come forward and demand that why is not a clear directive about *jīhad* being revealed, but when a *sūrah*

21. And those who have professed faith say: "Why is not a *sūrah* [regarding *jīhad*] revealed!" But when a clear *sūrah* was revealed and *jihād* was also mentioned in it, you see those inflicted with a malady in their hearts staring at you as though they are fainting away for fear of death. So pity be on them!

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containing an explicit directive of *jīhad* was revealed then those in whose hearts is the ailment of jealousy and hypocrisy look towards the Prophet (sws) as if they are facing the stupor of death.

There is an incomplete verb suppressed before يَقُوْلُ as per linguistic principles. Keeping this aspect in view, the translation of this verb would be: "they used to say."

The verb in الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا refers to a claim to what is expressed by the verb, and this usage is very common in Arabic. Consider, for example: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖ (١٣٦:٤) (O People! Who lay claim to faith, profess faith in God and His Messenger, (4:136)).

The words فِی الجِهَاد (about *jihād*) or فِی القِتَال (about *qitāl*) are suppressed after لَوْلَا نُزِّلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ. It is very common in the Qur'ān that if something is to be mentioned in detail later, it is initially mentioned rather concisely. An example of this style can be seen in verse 36 of this *sūrah*. This style is also adopted while citing questions posed by people. I have explained it under the following verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah: يَسْئَلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْاَهِلَّةِ (١٨٩:٢). The implied meaning is that first these people fervently demanded that why is not a clear directive regarding *jihād* revealed; however, when such a directive was revealed and that too in explicit terms, these claimants to faith began hiding here and there.

The word سُوْرَةٌ like the word كِتَابٌ has been used in the Qur'ān for a *sūrah* of the Qur'ān as well as a directive.[22] Here both meanings can be implied. The adjective مُحْكَمَةٌ which qualifies it shows its certainty and such clarity that requires no explanation. In other words, neither is there any vagueness in it nor does it require any elucidation and nor is it from among the matters of the *mutashābihāt* so that only God knows its exact reality.

The word مَّرَضٌ in رَاَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ فِیْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ refers to hypocrisy as well as the malice and envy these hypocrites had for Islam and the Prophet (sws). In verses twenty nine and thirty seven, an explanation of this is coming up. I have presented my research on this word in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

This portrayal of these hypocrites is also found in Sūrah al-Nisā' in the following words:

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوْٓا اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَ اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ۚ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً ۚ وَ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ ۚ لَوْلَآ اَخَّرْتَنَآ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ ؕ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيْلٌ ۚ وَ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقٰى ۣ وَ لَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ فَتِيْلًا. (٧٧:٤)

Have you seen those who were told: "Lay down your arms; recite your prayers and pay *zakāh*." When they were ordered to fight, some of them feared people as

22. See, for example: 9:86 (*Translator*)

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much as they feared God or even more. "Lord," they said, "why do You bid us fight? Could you not give us a brief respite?" Say: "Trifling are the pleasures of this life. Better is the life to come for those who would keep from evil. You shall not suffer injustice by as much as the husk of a date-stone." (4:77)

In other words, until the time Muslims were not directed to wage *jihād*, these people would put up a show of sincerity and selflessness by expressing their great zeal to undertake it; however, once this directive was given, they began fearing people more than God and went about hiding themselves.

The words فَاَوْلٰی لَهُمْ express curse and hate. They have the same meaning as وَيْلٌ لَّهُمْ. The implication is that when with their claim to faith they have also nurtured hypocrisy and cowardice in themselves, then the curse of God be on them.

طَاعَةٌ وَّقَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوْفٌ ۭ فَاِذَا عَزَمَ الْاَمْرُ ۣ فَلَوْ صَدَقُوا اللّٰهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ﴿۲۱﴾[23]

The verse says that the right attitude for them was to welcome this directive of *jihād* by the conventional words "we have listened and we obeyed," and then when its time come proven from their actions that they were true to the promise they made with God. Had they done this, it would have been better for them yet they adopted for themselves the path to doom.

The words طَاعَةٌ وَّقَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوْفٌ are in the place of *mubtadā'* and the *khabar* is suppressed because of strong contextual indication and as a requisite of eloquence. I have been explaining at various places in this exegesis when the intention is to fully focus the attention of the addressee on the *mubtadā'*, the *khabar* is suppressed. The words قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوْفٌ refer to the expression سَمِعْنَا وَ اَطَعْنَا (we listened and we obeyed). It is this expression which is what is conventional and customary for God from His sincere people. The sincere and faithful people of God have always welcomed every directive of God and His messengers with these words and this was only befitting for them since they had laid claim to faith; however, what actually happened was that they were inflicted with the stupor of death as soon as they were directed to wage *jihād*.

The expression فَاِذَا عَزَمَ الْاَمْرُ means that the matter has been decided, and that it has been resolved to undertake some practical measure for it.

In other words, it would have been befitting for them to utter the conventional acknowledgement of سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا (we listened and we obeyed) once they were directed to wage *jihād*, and when the final decision to launch it was communicated to them by God and His Prophet (sws), they should have substantiated their words through practice. It needs to be kept in mind that the directive given in verse 4 of this *sūrah* is

23. For them, the best attitude was obedience and the customary word. So, when the matter had been decided with certainty, then if they had been true to God, it would have been better for them.

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not to undertake *jihād* but to prepare for it and to encourage the believers. The practical step to launch it came later.

The words فَلَوْ صَدَقُوا اللّٰهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ imply that till now whatever they have done for the Messenger of God is merely making claims. The time to test this claim has just come. If they now practically demonstrate their commitment to this claim, this will open the door to a lot of good for them; however, instead of adopting this way, they chose for themselves the path of cowardice.

فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ اِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ اَنْ تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوْٓا اَرْحَامَكُمْ ﴿٢٢﴾[24]

The hypocrites are not directly addressed in the previous verse in the comment made on them; however, in this verse, they are directly addressed. This change in style is meant to reinforce the exhortation done to them. The verse says that if they evade the calls of this message, then they will not be able to benefit themselves or give any to their nation and end up in spreading anarchy in the society and severing blood relationships – something which they were deeply involved in the age of *jāhiliyyah*. In other words, if this is what they want, they are free to choose any path for themselves and then witness its fate; however, if instead of anarchy, they want real peace and justice and desire to strengthen their mutual relationships on the basis of brotherhood and affection, then the only way is to even go as far as to endanger their lives if needed to bolster and cement the cause of this religion – the religion which by uprooting polytheism and sectarian and tribal biases found in the age of *jāhiliyyah* is uniting all mankind on worshipping and showing obedience to God and on the ideology that all mankind is one family having a common ancestor.

Another reason for directly addressing these hypocrites to counsel them was that among them was one group which wanted to strike a compromise with the disbelievers of the Quraysh. In Sūrah al-Baqarah, this group has been referred to and they are again mentioned in verse thirty five of this *sūrah*. These people would assure the Quraysh and the Jews that though they have joined the ranks of the Muslims, they will continue to follow them in some matters. In verse 26 of this *sūrah*, this group is also mentioned. These people were successful to some extent in concealing this hypocritical policy of theirs till the phase of war had not arrived. However, once this phase arrived, the time for them to hide expired. They were not ready to wage war against the Quraysh and its allies and they could not remain among the Muslims if they tried to shun this war. Thus to conceal their hypocrisy they started to spread the notion that they do not desire bloodshed among brothers and that they wanted that the Muslims and the Quraysh and others make peace with one another and live amicably. This is the right way to live. If instead of adopting this path, war is waged then

24. Therefore, if you turned away, what else is expected from you than spreading disorder in the land and severing blood relationships.

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uncontrollable anarchy will ensue in the land. Because of this hypocritical policy of theirs, these people would call themselves reformers and peace-lovers. They tried their best that Muslims adopt this policy so that their own hypocrisy would remain hidden and the objective of the enemies of Islam is also achieved. While keeping this mentality of theirs in view, it is said in the verse under discussion that the path they have adopted for themselves and the path they want others to adopt as well is not the path of peace and reconciliation; it is like turning back to anarchy and killing one's fellow human beings – something which they had remained deeply engaged in.

The path of peace and brotherhood is that all should lead their lives as servants of one God and as the descendents of one Adam and adopt that way of life which is based on the ideology of oneness of God and oneness of the progenitor of mankind. It is this ideology which the Qur'ān is calling them to. This will not be achieved by keeping intact the ways of the *jāhiliyyah* period in which each tribe had a separate god and a separate ancestor. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the collective system of Islam is based on the ideology of oneness of God and on the oneness of the progenitor of mankind. I have discussed this issue in detail in Sūrah al-Nisā'.

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فَاَصَمَّهُمْ وَاَعْمٰٓى اَبْصَارَهُمْ ﴿٢٣﴾[25]

The verse says that such people have been cursed by God. As a result of this curse, their ears have become deaf and their eyes have become blind. God showed them light and they were fully convinced that this light has been revealed by Him but they keep turning back to see the darkness of their age of *jāhiliyyah* and are desirous of going back to it. As a result of this ungrateful attitude, God has cursed them and taken away His light from them. As a further consequence of this, their ears have lost the ability to hear the truth and their eyes have lost the real vision to see the truth.

اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ اَمْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبٍ اَقْفَالُهَا ﴿٢٤﴾[26]

The verse says that it is the Qur'ān which revives the hearts provided that these people had reflected on it; however, these worthless people never deliberate on it; as a result the rust which comes on hearts has in fact inflicted their hearts; so just as locks close doors, their hearts too have been closed because of this rust.

The word قُلُوْبٍ is used here as an indefinite noun to express hate and abhorrence. This usage can be seen in the following verse of Sūrah al-Nisā': مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوْهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلٰٓى اَدْبَارِهَآ (٤:٤٧) (before We obliterate your faces and turn them backward, (4:47)). Here the word وُجُوْهًا has been similarly used to express hate and abhorrence. In other

25. It is these people who have been cursed by God; thus He made their ears dumb and eyes blind.

26. Do they not ponder on the Qur'ān or are there locks upon their hearts?

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words, so horrible and hateful are these hearts that the speaker does not even want to refer to them by identifying them.

The word اَقْفَالُهَا refers to those things which inflict the heart with a malady or plague it like rust. Such maladies are mentioned in this *sūrah* (see verses 26 and 29) and are also mentioned in detail at other places. Love of life, fear of death, stinginess, cowardice, jealousy, hypocrisy and other similar things are some of their prominent components. If a person has political authority, then this can also inflict him with arrogance and conceit and as a natural consequence of this he becomes stone-hearted and callous. The remedy to these maladies is to listen and to understand the Qur'ān, as has been explained under verses 23 and 24 of Sūrah al-Anfāl. However, it is the Qur'ān which such people evade and dread the most; hence their treatment becomes impossible.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ ارْتَدُّوْا عَلٰٓى اَدْبَارِهِمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَى ۙ الشَّيْطٰنُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ ؕ وَاَمْلٰى لَهُمْ ﴿۲۵﴾[27]

The verse says that the attitude of these hypocrites is akin to apostasy. They fully knew that what the Prophet (sws) was calling them to is the path of truth. Thus they came forward and accepted it but when they were faced with trials Satan deceived them and they were misled by him and God too gave them respite. The reason for this respite was that people who intentionally deviate from the path of truth to merely follow their base desires are given time and opportunity by God so that they can wander wherever they want to.

It is evident from other places of the Qur'ān also that hypocrisy is tantamount to apostasy. In Sūrah al-Mā'idah, while referring to these hypocrites, it is said: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِهٖ فَسَوْفَ يَاْتِى اللّٰهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُّحِبُّهُمْ وَ يُحِبُّوْنَهٗٓ (۵:۵۴) (Believers! If any among you renounces his faith, God will soon replace them by others who love Him and are loved by Him, (5:54)).

The subject of the verb اَمْلٰى is God. In the Qur'ān, this verb is used for Him only and its usage for Him only is appropriate. Its ascription towards Satan is not appropriate at all. If there is an indication present, the verb itself is sufficient to show who its subject is. There are numerous examples of this in the Qur'ān. Readers are advised to look up verse 110 of Sūrah Yūsuf.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ كَرِهُوْا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ سَنُطِيْعُكُمْ فِىْ بَعْضِ الْاَمْرِ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اِسْرَارَهُمْ ﴿۲۶﴾[28]

God consigned these hypocrites to Satan because even after being fully convinced

27. Indeed, people who turned away once God's guidance was revealed to them were deceived by Satan and God gave them respite.

28. This happened because they said to those who detested what was revealed by God: They said: "We shall follow you in some affairs." And God knows this secret of theirs.

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of the truth they connived with the enemies of Islam who intensely abhorred the Book revealed by God. These hypocrites assured them that in some matters they will keep siding with them. The words لِلَّذِيْنَ كَرِهُوْا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ refer to the leaders of the Quraysh and the Jews whose enmity with Islam was very evident but these hypocrites would assure them that though they have joined the ranks of the Muslims yet this certainly does not mean that they have no relation left with these leaders; if hard times ensue, they will side with them and that in this matter they will not care about the happiness or sorrow of anyone. It is mentioned in Sūrah al-Ḥashr about these very hypocrites that they would keep going to the Jews to assure them that if they were turned out, they too would go along with them and in this matter not care what anyone says: لَئِنْ اُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيْعُ فِيْكُمْ اَحَدًا اَبَدًا (۵۹:۱۱) (if you are driven out, then we shall necessarily go out with you and we will not listen to anyone regarding you, (59:11)).

The word اِسْرَارَ in وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اِسْرَارَهُمْ refers to this very connivance of theirs and this sentence is not merely a piece of information; it reflects threat and warning. The implication is that God is fully aware of these clandestine activities and soon their fate will become evident.

فَكَيْفَ اِذَا تَوَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَضْرِبُوْنَ وُجُوْهَهُمْ وَاَدْبَارَهُمْ ﴿۲۷﴾[29]

The verse depicts the fate of these people: The punishment of those who conspire against Islam begins right from the time angels claim their souls; so these people should think that what will they do when the stern angels of God claim their souls by striking them on their mouths and their backs and no one will be able to help them.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمُ اتَّبَعُوْا مَآ اَسْخَطَ اللّٰهَ وَكَرِهُوْا رِضْوَانَهٗ فَاَحْبَطَ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿۲۸﴾[30]

These people will reach this fate because all their efforts revolved around opposing God; they adopted all those ways which displeased God and stayed away from things that could please God. In retribution of this, angels will bring torment to them right from the time of their death and God will lay waste all their seemingly pious deeds they did while claiming to be adherents of Islam.

اَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ اَنْ لَّنْ يُّخْرِجَ اللّٰهُ اَضْغَانَهُمْ ﴿۲۹﴾[31]

This is another threat sounded to them: if they are conspiring and conniving against

29. So, what will happen when the angels will claim their souls, striking their faces and their backs?

30. This will be because they followed what incurred the wrath of God and hated what pleased Him. So, God brought their deeds to nothing.

31. Do these people in whose hearts is a malady think that God will never reveal their malice?

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Islam, do they think that these acts of theirs will always remain hidden and God will never expose them? If this is what they think, then they are totally wrong. Time has now come that they be exposed so that everyone fully recognizes them and no one is deceived by them.

The word مَّرَضٌ refers both to hypocrisy and to malice and jealousy which these hypocrites had for Islam and the Muslims and because of which they were doing such evil things mentioned earlier. Hypocrisy in itself is a malady; however, this malady increases when jealousy and malice are added to it. The word اَضْغَان refers to this very jealousy and malice. The word اَضْغَان is a plural of ضِغْنٌ and means "malice."

وَلَوْنَشَآءُ لَاَرَيْنٰكَهُمْ فَلَعَرَفْتَهُمْ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ ؕ وَلَتَعْرِفَنَّهُمْ فِيْ لَحْنِ الْقَوْلِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اَعْمَالَكُمْ ﴿۳۰﴾[32]

The word لَحْنٌ also means *tawriyah* ie a person states something in a manner that it has a specific connotation in his heart yet he communicates a different meaning to others. The hypocrites were very adept in this art. They would converse in a dubious manner so as to convince both Muslims and the disbelievers at the same time that their sympathies are with them.

The hypocrites are threatened by addressing the Prophet (sws): it is not at all difficult for God to expose them so that the Prophet (sws) is able to recognize them by their distinctive marks that they are in fact hypocrites. If the Almighty is not doing this, then this is His magnanimity and graciousness that He is concealing their sins; however, it is not difficult at all for the Prophet (sws) to identify them. He can easily recognize them through their double-meaning words, hesitant talk and dubious conversation.

In this very context, the words وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اَعْمَالَكُمْ directly address the hypocrites that if they are able to deceive Muslims through their dual and dubious words, then this is no success they should be proud of. God is fully aware of their deeds, and when He knows, what will be the benefit they gain from hiding it from others.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتّٰى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ ۙ وَنَبْلُوَاَخْبَارَكُمْ ﴿۳۱﴾[33]

The verse says that the Almighty will necessarily test and try them through good and bad circumstances of various types until He is able to sift out those who adopt the path of *jihād* and perseverance from those who are mere claimers to this. The implication is that it is not the way of the Almighty to write on the forehead of every hypocrite that he is a hypocrite; however, this much is His established and

32. And if We pleased, We would have them pointed out to you and you would recognize them by their looks. And you will surely know them from their hesitant words. And God has knowledge of your deeds.

33. And We shall definitely put you to test to distinguish the valiant and the resolute among you and test your circumstances.

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unassailable practice that He keeps distinguishing the good from the evil through various trials. Since this is a requisite of His established practice, they too will have to pass through this trial. As a result, those people will not be able to hide themselves for long who want to remain in the ranks of the Muslims.

A reflection on this verse shows that the real purpose of these trials is to pinpoint the fighters for the cause of God and those who persevere; however, as a natural consequence of this those people too will be detected who through deception are desirous to be counted as Muslims. The words وَنَبْلُوَاْ اَخْبَارَكُمْ refer to this. The word اَخْبَار refers to their circumstances. This, in other words, can be understood that God tests people to sift out the good among them; however, the consequence is that the evil-doers are also identified.

Since this trial is a requisite of God's established practice, it has been mentioned in an emphatic way by employing the assertive particle *lām*. The verb عَلِمَ here means to sift out and to discern, as explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَشَآقُّوا الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدٰى ۙ لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَسَيُحْبِطُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿۳۲﴾[34]

Here, at the end, the *sūrah* turns to the same topic with which it began and the purpose, as shall become evident from the coming verses, is to warn the hypocrites that the opposition shown by the disbelievers to God and His Messenger will be of no avail. They will not be able to harm them; in fact, they themselves will be humiliated. All their efforts will end up in vain in this world and in the Hereafter too they will be doomed. So the hypocrites must not ruin their Herein and the Hereafter by following the ways of the disbelievers and should obey God and His Messenger with full devotion; if they do not show weakness, God will make them succeed and humiliate these enemies.

The words اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَ صَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ show that the Quraysh and their allies are implied here as the disbelievers. Verse one also mentions them by these words. The words وَ شَآقُّوا الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدٰى throw further light on them: they are fully convinced that what the Messenger of God is calling them to is the truth; however, they are adamant in opposing it merely in conceit of their leadership. This opposition of theirs will not be able to harm the religion of God in any way; however, they will doom their own selves. In other words, if they are opposing the Messenger of God in spite of being convinced that he is His Messenger and are fully convinced that what he is calling them towards is the truth, then how long will their artificial verve help them?

34. Those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God and opposed the Messenger after they had been clearly guided shall in no way harm God. And God will bring their deeds to nothing.

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They will be humiliated at last.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوْٓا اَعْمَالَكُمْ ﴿٣٣﴾[35]

Though the address is general, it is evident from its style that it is specially directed towards weak Muslims who are under discussion in the previous verses. The verse says: "O People who have professed faith! It is an essential requirement of your faith that you obey God and His Prophet (sws)." It is evident from contextual indication that the verb اَطِيْعُوا is in its complete and thorough meaning. Thus its true implication would be that people in all circumstances while keeping above vested interests should obey God and His Messenger.

The words وَلَا تُبْطِلُوْٓا اَعْمَالَكُمْ imply that through this obedience only their deeds will bear fruit; if this obedience is kept subservient to their vested interests all their deeds will end up in vain even though they be religious in nature. Only that faith is acceptable to God which is in accordance with His terms. The religiosity of those who want to profess faith as per their own terms and obey its dictates as far as it suits their interests will not be totally discarded; so they should not let their deeds turn to nothing by adopting these ways!

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ﴿٣٤﴾[36]

The implication of this verse is that God will never forgive these disbelievers who adopted the path of disbelief themselves and also stopped others from treading the path leading to God and then died while remaining adamant on this disbelief. In other words, the same fate will be met by people who will seek their support and conspire to keep their friendship intact with them.

فَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَتَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى السَّلْمِ ۖ وَاَنْتُمُ الْاَعْلَوْنَ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَّتِرَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ ﴿٣٥﴾[37]

The word سَّلْمِ means "peace and reconciliation." I have mentioned earlier while explaining verses 22 and 23 that since these hypocrites do not have the courage to fight, they would keeping talking about peace and reconciliation. They would advise the Muslims as well as the Quraysh to make peace between one another and not engage in war. They would present themselves as a group inclined to peace and would give the impression to people that it is this policy which is in the interest of the country

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35. Believers! Obey God and obey the Messenger, and do not let your labours come to nothing.

36. Indeed, those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God and died in this state, God shall never forgive them.

37. So, do not be feeble and call for a compromise and you will remain dominant and God is on your side and will not show any dishonesty with you in your deeds.

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otherwise a brother will spill the blood of his bother and the whole body of the nation will be dismembered. This policy of theirs was totally founded on their cowardice and vested interests; but they would call people to it in the garb of peace and amity. This would impress people having inclination towards hypocrisy and this verse actually exposes this weakness of theirs: they should not become proponents of peace and reconciliation by hiding behind the veil of cowardice; they should come forward to wage *jihād* with faith and courage. If they do so, they will necessarily succeed and their enemies will be humbled and humiliated; God is with them and when He is with them, then His help will be with them at every step; they should also rest assured that God will never be insincere and untruthful to His promises to them regarding the recompense of their deeds; He will fully reward each and every deed of theirs whether big or small.

The linguistic style found in فَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَتَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى السَّلْمِ is the same as the one explained in the following verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ (٤٢:٢) (do not confound truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth, (2:42)). There is no need to repeat the particle of negation لَا when both parts of a conjugate clause express the same reality. Same is the case in the verse under discussion. Since this call to peace was the result of the cowardice of these hypocrites the word تَدْعُوْا is conjugated with فَلَا تَهِنُوْا and the particle of negation لَا was suppressed so that it becomes evident from the very style of the discourse that this call to peace is not because they are peace-loving but because this is an unsuccessful attempt to hide their cowardice.

The expression وَتَرَهُ حَقَّهُ means: "he was dishonest in the rights of a person." The words وَلَنْ يَّتِرَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ mean that people should not be afraid that God will be insincere or untruthful to them regarding the reward of their deeds; on the contrary, He will richly reward them. When each deed shall be fully and duly rewarded, there is no reason to desist from sacrifices for His cause.

اِنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ ؕ وَاِنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا يُؤْتِكُمْ اُجُوْرَكُمْ وَلَا يَسْـَٔلْكُمْ اَمْوَالَكُمْ ﴿٣٦﴾[38]

The verse says that people should not desist from sacrificing their life and wealth for the cause of God by being lured away by the love of this world. If the wealth and resources of this life have any value, then it is only this much that a person uses them to earn for the Hereafter. If a person was not able to use his life in this manner, this will mean that he spent his life as a slave to his desires and it would turn out to be meaningless for him. They should rest assured that if they lead a life of faith and virtue and spend their wealth for the cause of God, then this is not a non-lucrative deal; in fact, God will richly reward all their deeds and instead of the meagre and

38. The life of this world is but a sport and entertainment. And if you profess faith and be pious, God will reward you and will not ask for all your wealth.

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paltry riches of this life they will be blessed with an eternal kingdom.

The word اِحْفَاءٌ is suppressed after وَلَا يَسْئَلْكُمْ اَمْوَالَكُمْ as is evident from the next verse. Briefly stating something before explaining it is a common style of the Qur'ān. For this very reason, questions are cited in the Qur'ān in a very brief and concise manner so that the answer itself can explain the brevity. The word اِحْفَاءٌ means to take something completely and totally or to demand something insistently. These words actually sound an assurance to these spineless people that God will not put them through the test of demanding all their wealth; He will only demand a part of it and in this too He will richly recompense them. So they should not be afraid of spending in His cause and also not feel pushed at His calls to spend in His way.

اِنْ يَّسْئَلْكُمُوْهَا فَيُحْفِكُمْ تَبْخَلُوْا وَ يُخْرِجْ اَضْغَانَكُمْ ﴿۳۷﴾[39]

The implication of this verse is that the Almighty will not demand all of their wealth because if He does they will be fully exposed as they will necessarily show stinginess, and in this way the malice and jealousy they hide in their hearts against Islam and the Muslims will become known. In verse 29 above, these very hypocrites were threatened that they should not be deceived by the fact that the Almighty will conceal their malice and jealousy forever. By putting them into any trial, He can expose them. This thing is stated here from another aspect that had God wanted, He could have asked them to give Him all their wealth or a major portion of it because it is He who gave it to them; however, He does not do so for this would expose people whose stinginess and hypocrisy are as yet under cover. The implication is that people should show gratitude on this graciousness of the Almighty that He has not put them through such a trial; otherwise, had He willed, He would have made known their real selves.

هٰۤاَنْتُمْ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنْفِقُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يَّبْخَلُ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّبْخَلْ فَاِنَّمَا يَبْخَلُ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَ اَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَآءُ ۚ وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۙ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُوْنُوْۤا اَمْثَالَكُمْ ﴿۳۸﴾[40]

The style of the expression هٰۤاَنْتُمْ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ has been explained at an earlier instance in this exegesis. The verse expresses sorrow and yearning on the attitude of the hypocrites: when they are called to spend in the way of God, they are miserly as if they are spending for someone else even though showing miserliness to God is like showing miserliness to their own selves; if God asks from them to spend, then this is not for

39. And if He demands and demands all, you would show stinginess and this would reveal your malice.

40. Listen up! You are those who when called to spend for the cause of God, there are some among you are stingy. And he who is stingy should remember that he is stingy to himself. God does not need you, but you need Him. And if you turn away, He will replace you by others; then they shall not be like yourselves.

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Himself but for themselves so that He can reward them the eternal kingdom in recompense.

The words وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۙ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُوْنُوْٓا اَمْثَالَكُمْ sound a threat to the hypocrites that their attitude is akin to apostasy. If they want to become apostates, then they may as well; God does not care for them. He will bring forth other people to serve His religion who will not be worthless and despicable like them. In Sūrah al-Mā'idah, similar words used for hypocrites are: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِهٖ فَسَوْفَ يَاْتِى اللّٰهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُّحِبُّهُمْ وَ يُحِبُّوْنَهٗٓ اَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (٥:٥٤) (Believers! If any among you renounces his faith, God will soon replace them by others who love Him and are loved by Him; they are soft to the believers and stern to the disbelievers, (5:54)).

If in the light of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the words ثُمَّ لَا يَكُوْنُوْٓا اَمْثَالَكُمْ can be interpreted as follows: these hypocrites harbour malice for God and have absolutely no interest in earning the pleasure of God; for this reason, God too has revulsion for them. Contrary to you, they will be those who would love God and seek His pleasure and thus God too would love them. These hypocrites are very soft to the disbelievers: they seek friendship from them and they – the disbelievers – are using them for their interest against Islam and the Muslims. On the contrary, these new people will be very affectionate and gracious for the believers, but if the disbelievers will try to dent them or use them for their own interest, they will find the believers to be like a rock solid wall. With the grace and blessings of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (so gratitude be to God for this).

Raḥmānabād
9th September 1976 AD
13th Ramaḍān al-Mubārak 1396 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Sūrah al-Fatḥ (48)

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Sūrah al-Fatḥ

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* bears witness to the fulfilment of the promise made with the believers in verse 35 five of the previous *sūrah.*[1] It begins with the truce of Ḥudaybiyah which proved to be a prelude to the conquest of Makkah and to the completion of favour to the Prophet (sws) and his *ummah*. Stated in it are also the predictions and glad tidings of conquest and dominance of this *ummah* mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel so that it becomes evident to both the believers and the disbelievers that whatever happened, is happening and will happen is not by chance. All this is pre-determined in the scheme of God which is bound to materialize. No force can stop it.

Background of the *Sūrah*

In order to understand this *sūrah*, it is essential to understand its background. It was revealed as a ray of hope in very hopeless circumstances and as glad tidings of an open victory in circumstances when Muslims felt that they were being vanquished. It assured the Muslims in very precarious circumstances, and in not more than two years every promise and threat given materialized in a manner that no doubt remained about it in the minds of both friends and foes.

The detail of this rather concise premise is that in 6th AH, the Prophet (sws) was given glad tidings in a dream that he will do *'umrah* with a group of his companions. On the basis of this dream, he called upon people to prepare themselves for *'umrah*. Though Muslims were in a continuous state of war with the Quraysh and there was a strong chance that if Muslims went to offer *'umrah* in their collective capacity, they would definitely try to stop them and the situation could lead to a battle. However, Muslims were so overwhelmed with the deprivation from the Baytullāh that they got ready to accompany the Prophet (sws) while disregarding this danger. The hypocrites,

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1. The verse reads:

فَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَتَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى السَّلْمِ ۖ وَاَنْتُمُ الْاَعْلَوْنَ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَّتِرَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ (٤٧: ٣٥)

So, do not falter and call for a compromise and you will remain dominant and God is on your side and will not show any dishonesty with you in your deeds (47:35)

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who have been mentioned in the previous *sūrah*, tried their best to discourgae and demotivate the Muslims. They tried to strike fear in their hearts by saying that those who will go to Makkah will never return. However, Muslims fully trusted the dream of the Prophet (sws). For this reason, about fifteen hundred Companions (rta) became ready to accompany him.

There is a difference of opinion between historians about the month of this journey – whether it was Rajab or Dhū al-Qa'dah. It was, in any case, one of the two. These months have always remained specific to offer *ḥajj* and *'umrah*. For this reason, Muslims hoped that there is a very logical reason for the Quraysh showing respect to the sanctity of these months. The Prophet (sws) and the Companions (rta) wore the *aḥrām* of *'umrah* at Dhū al-Ḥulayfah, a place six miles from Makkah. They took along with them seventy camels for sacrifice and to distinguish these animals, people put collars around their necks so that it becomes evident to every onlooker that these are sacrificial animals (*hadī*) and no one should harm them. They did not have any ammunition with them; all they had were swords and they too were sheathed. In other words, it was fully taken care of the fact that the Quraysh present no excuse for a battle; however, their over-blown pride of the age of *jāhilliyah* did not allow them to permit the procession to enter Makkah. They tried to make different excuses by making incursions through their people but the Prophet (sws) did not allow any of their mischief to succeed. When he reached Ḥudaybiyah, he sent an envoy to their leaders with the message that he had come with the intention of offering *'umrah* only; he has no other intention. However, they decided to kill the envoy and it was only with great difficulty that his life was saved after a group of people interfered. After that, he sent his special envoy: 'Uthmān (rta). He too tried to fully assure the Quraysh but they continued to show stubbornness. However, they did not misbehave with 'Uthmān (rta) in any way and treated him very respectfully; they even offered him to do *ṭawāf* if he wanted to. 'Uthmān (sws) did not accept their offer because he was not ready to undertake this ritual without the Prophet (sws).

In this pendimonium, 'Uthmān's return got delayed and a rumour spread in the Muslim camp that he had been martyred. Quite naturally, this acutely inflamed the Muslims. The Prophet (sws) too was effected by it. He called upon people to pledge a covenant of *jihād* at this hands so that a do or die war could be waged against the Quraysh. The Companions (rta) earnestly and enthusiastically took this pledge. When the Quraysh received the news that Muslims were about to launch an attack, they sent a delegation under the leadership of Suhayl ibn 'Amr to negotiate peace. The delegation, in order to salvage the pride of the Quraysh, greatly stressed upon the Muslims to go back this year and return the following one whence the Makkans will vacate the city for three days to avoid any clash. It was also insisted upon that if any person of the Quraysh ran away to the Muslims, the latter would be under obligation to return him whereas the reverse would not be the case. The Companions (rta) were not ready to accept these conditions at any cost. However, the Prophet (sws), on

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divine bidding, accepted them and a settlement was reached on the following conditions.

1. For ten years, there shall be no war between the two parties. During this time, no party will launch any open or hidden onslaught against one another.

2. During this time, if a person belonging to the Quraysh ran away to the Muslims, they will have to return him, while the Quraysh would not be bound to return any person of the Muslims who goes to them.

3. Any tribe of the Arabs can enter into this settlement by becoming an ally of either of the two parties.

4. Muslims will go back this year and return the next to offer *'umrah*. They will be able to stay in Makkah for three days and each of them, if he wishes, can only bring one sword. In these three days, the people of Makkah will vacate the city so that any clash can be avoided.

Two of these conditions were every detestable to the Muslims, as has been indicated earlier. People thought that accepting them would be tantamount to an acknowledgement of defeat and were not ready at any cost to accept any condition that would depict them as the weaker party. It was at this instance that the caliph 'Umar (rta) expressed his emotions in a manner that made him regret it all his life. After the peace agreement had been signed, the Prophet (sws) directed the Muslims to offer sacrifice and then shave their heads and in this way complete their *'umrah*. However, such was the sorrow and distress found in the Muslims that no one was ready to comply. At last, the Prophet (sws) himself took the initiative. When people realized that there was no room for any change in the directive, they too were compelled to get up and complete the rites of *'umrah.* While returning, the general feeling was of being overwhelmed and of being vanquished. For this reason, a natural question that came to their minds was that if the dream of prophets of God are true, then what happened to the dream which the Prophet (sws) saw and as a result of which had embarked on this journey. It was in these circumstances in which this *sūrah* was revealed and as has been indicated earler was revealed as glad tidings of a clear victory. As far as the question is concerned that how did a thing that was seen as defeat by common Muslims became a clear victory, it shall be answered in the *tafsīr* of the *sūrah*.

Readers may first take an overview of the meanings of the *sūrah*.

Analysis of the Meanings

Verses (1-7): The Prophet (sws) is given glad tidings that he has been granted an open victory in the form of the Ḥudaybiyah truce. This open victory is a prelude to an imminent conquest of Makkah which will totally humble the disbelievers before him; the Almighty will complete the favour of His religion on him and after successfully acomplishing his mission, he will attain the complete and eternal pleasure of God. A very blessed aspect of this campaign is that He opened the way to enhancement of

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faith and to Paradise for the believers, which in the sight of God is great success. This campaign also became the means of God's anger and condemnation on men and women from among the hypocrites who would make all sorts of evil estimations about God and were not able to grasp the reality that all the forces of heavens and the earth are under the command of God and He, in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom, makes use of their service the way He desires or can desire.

Verses (8-10): The common Muslims are addressed and told that a Messenger comes from God as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. It is the duty of people to profess faith in him, respect him, support him in all his campaigns and be his helpers. Those who pledge a covenant at his hands, in fact, pledge a covenant at the hands of God. If they fulfil the obligations imposed by this pledge, then they will receive great reward, and if they do not do so, then they should remember that it is only they who will be doomed for this behaviour. God will not suffer any loss from this.

Verses (11-16): The Prophet (sws) is informed that at this instance the hypocrites who did not go out with him will come to him to beg pardon on the grounds that they were forced not to go because of their household responsibilities; so they should be forgiven and the Prophet (sws) should pray to God for their repentance. He is told to inform them that the real reason for not going was their thought that this time the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims would not return and that through this speculation of theirs they have only sought to ruin their ownselves. Now their matter rests with God. He alone will forgive whomsoever He wants and forgive whomsoever He wants.

The Prophet (sws) is also informed about these hypocrites that when they will see that victory is being gained without any war, they will try their best to secure a place among the warriors; however, he must never give them this permission. They should be informed that soon they will be faced with a poweful enemy. If at that moment they go out, it would be alright and if at that moment too they do not go out by making similar excuses, then for them too the same punishment will be ordained as has been ordained for the disbelievers.

Verse (17): Those people are mentioned whose excuse to not attend the battle would not be regarded as hypocrisy as long as they remain obedient from their hearts to God and His Messenger (rta).

Verses (18-21): The courageous among the Companions who took the *bay'ah riḍwān* are mentioned. They are given glad tidings of victory, spoils of war and of the conquest of Makkah.

Verses (22-25): A mention of the fact that had the Quraysh waged war on the occasion of Ḥudaybiyah, they would have been routed. The aspect which made the Muslims superior in this agreement is referred to and also mentioned is the fact that this truce was an open moral and religious defeat of the Quraysh. Stated then is the real reason because of which Muslims were not allowed to wage war in spite of the fact that Quraysh had been over-awed by them.

Verse (26): The moral victory secured by Muslims in the wake of the moral defeat

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earned by the Quraysh is referred to. In contrast with the bias of the Quraysh to emotional frenzy, the majesty displayed by Muslims in piety and in obeying God and His Prophet (sws) is alluded to.

Verse (27): An affirmation of the dream of the Prophet (sws). The wisdom in its delay to materialize is referred to.

Verses (28-29): A mention of the fact that the supremacy of Islam over all religions is beyond doubt. The parable of the Prophet (rta) and his Companions (rta) found in the Torah and the parable of the gradual victory of the truth found in the Gospel is alluded to.

Section I: Verses (1-7)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِنَّا فَتَحۡنَا لَکَ فَتۡحًا مُّبِیۡنًا ۙ﴿۱﴾ لِّیَغۡفِرَ لَکَ اللّٰہُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنۡ ذَنۡۢبِکَ وَ مَا تَاَخَّرَ وَ یُتِمَّ نِعۡمَتَہٗ عَلَیۡکَ وَ یَہۡدِیَکَ صِرَاطًا
مُّسۡتَقِیۡمًا ۙ﴿۲﴾ وَّ یَنۡصُرَکَ اللّٰہُ نَصۡرًا عَزِیۡزًا ﴿۳﴾ ہُوَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَنۡزَلَ السَّکِیۡنَۃَ فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ لِیَزۡدَادُوۡۤا اِیۡمَانًا مَّعَ
اِیۡمَانِہِمۡ ؕ وَ لِلّٰہِ جُنُوۡدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَ کَانَ اللّٰہُ عَلِیۡمًا حَکِیۡمًا ۙ﴿۴﴾ لِّیُدۡخِلَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ وَ الۡمُؤۡمِنٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِیۡ مِنۡ
تَحۡتِہَا الۡاَنۡہٰرُ خٰلِدِیۡنَ فِیۡہَا وَ یُکَفِّرَ عَنۡہُمۡ سَیِّاٰتِہِمۡ ؕ وَ کَانَ ذٰلِکَ عِنۡدَ اللّٰہِ فَوۡزًا عَظِیۡمًا ۙ﴿۵﴾ وَّ یُعَذِّبَ الۡمُنٰفِقِیۡنَ وَ الۡمُنٰفِقٰتِ
وَ الۡمُشۡرِکِیۡنَ وَ الۡمُشۡرِکٰتِ الظَّآنِّیۡنَ بِاللّٰہِ ظَنَّ السَّوۡءِ ؕ عَلَیۡہِمۡ دَآئِرَۃُ السَّوۡءِ ۚ وَ غَضِبَ اللّٰہُ عَلَیۡہِمۡ وَ لَعَنَہُمۡ وَ اَعَدَّ لَہُمۡ جَہَنَّمَ ؕ
وَ سَآءَتۡ مَصِیۡرًا ﴿۶﴾ وَ لِلّٰہِ جُنُوۡدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَ کَانَ اللّٰہُ عَزِیۡزًا حَکِیۡمًا ﴿۷﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

Indeed, We have blessed you with a clear victory so that God may forgive you your past and future sins, complete His favour upon you and may guide you to a straight path and bestow on you His undefeatable help. (1-3)

It was He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the faithful so that their faith may grow with their faith and all the legions of the heavens and the earth belong to God and God is All-Knowing and Wise; so that He may admit the believers, both men and women, into gardens watered by running streams. They will abide in them forever and so that He may brush away their sins and this, in God's sight, is a great triumph. (4-5)

And that God may punish the hypocrites and the idolaters, men and women, who would make evil estimations about God. A turn of evil shall befall them alone and God's wrath was on them and He has cursed them and has prepared for them Hell and it is an evil abode. And to God belong the legions of the heavens and the earth and God is Mighty and Wise. (6-7)

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Explanation

اِنَّا فَتَحۡنَا لَكَ فَتۡحًا مُّبِيۡنًا ۙ[2]

The expression فَتۡحًا مُّبِيۡنًا (clear victory) refers to the truce of Ḥudaybiyah. There is no occasion of interpreting it to refer to any other victory. There are a number of aspects with regard to which it can be called a clear victory:

Firstly, this is the first occasion on which the Quraysh openly accepted that Muslims too had a right on the Baytullāh. This acknowledgement was done as a favour to the Muslims but was done after they were over-awed with their might. It will become evident from verse 24 that had this peace agreement not been struck and a war had ensued, the victory for the Muslims was certain. The Quraysh had fully assessed this situation and thus were desirous of an agreement; however, in order to have the upper hand, they wanted the Muslims not insist on *'umrah* this year and should come the following year. In order to please the Muslims, they tried to gratify them by offering to vacate the city for three days when they come the following year to avoid any clash. This was no small an offer from the Quraysh.

Secondly, as a result of this agreement, the Quraysh accepted the Muslims as an equal political force in Arabia. They no longer regarded the Muslims as rebels and traitors which they hitherto openly proclaimed; to them Muslims were now a rival political force of equal strength. Thus they openly acknowledged the right of the Muslims that they could make any of the Arab tribes as their allies if the latter were willing.

Thirdly, the Quryash also acknowledged the military might of the Muslims because they themselves insisted to write the condition in the agreement that there shall be no war between the two for ten years.

Fourthly, if on this occasion, the Almighty did not allow the Prophet (sws) and his companions to wage war, then this was not because of any weakness of the Muslims; it was solely because there were many who had openly announced themselves as Muslims and many who were Muslim in their hearts and had yet to openly announce this and who as yet had not migrated. There was a danger that in the event of a war, they could be harmed by the Muslims themselves.

In short, there were many aspects of this truce being a clear victory for the Muslims which could not have been hidden from them; however, the Quraysh displayed their bigotry that they possessed from the days of *jāhiliyyah* in such a manner and some incidents like the incident of Abū Jandal were so inciting that a general feeling prevailed among the Muslims that they were the weaker of the two parties. In their frenzy of emotions, people could not fully reflect on the conditions of the agreement

2. Indeed, We have blessed you with a clear victory.

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and assess what they would gain and what they would lose as a result of it. When this *sūrah* unveiled the actual situation, people realized that they had committed a mistake in understanding the implications of the agreement. When its consequences came before them, every person openly said that this agreement had proven to be a prelude to the conquest of Makkah.

لِّيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللّٰهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْۢبِكَ وَمَا تَاَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ۙ﴿۲﴾ وَّيَنْصُرَكَ اللّٰهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيْزًا ﴿۳﴾[3]

The particle لِ is to express the consequence. In other words, the meaning of the verse is that this clear victory which the Almighty has blessed the Muslims with is a prelude to the following things which the Almighty will grant the Prophet (sws):

Firstly, time is near when the Prophet will be free from the responsibilities of his mission, and the Almighty will bless him with His mercy by forgiving all his past and future sins.

Secondly, the Almighty will be completing his favour on him.

Thirdly, the Almighty will open the true way of guidance for him.

Fourthly, the Almighty will grant him with an unassailable dominance.

All these four things are mentioned here rather concisely; in order to understand them fully it is needed that they may be fully explained in the light of the parallels of the Qur'ān.

The words لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللّٰهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْۢبِكَ وَمَا تَاَخَّرَ give glad tiding to the Prophet (sws) that after this clear victory, time has arrived for him in which he will successfully complete the responsibilities imposed on him in the capacity of a Messenger of God. This subject is discussed in the Qur'ān at various places in different styles. For example, in Sūrah al-Naṣr, the words are:

اِذَا جَآءَ نَصْرُ اللّٰهِ وَالْفَتْحُ. وَرَاَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ فِيْ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ اَفْوَاجًا. فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ تَوَّابًا.

(۱۱۰:۱-۳)

When the help of God and the victory comes and you see men embrace the religion of God in multitudes, extol the glory of your Lord while expressing gratitude to Him and seek His forgiveness. Indeed, He is ever disposed to mercy. (110:1-3)

In the above *sūrah*, besides the glad tidings of conquest and dominance there is an indication of the fact that time would arrive when he would be relieved of his

3. So that God may forgive you your past and future sins, complete His favour upon you and may guide you to a straight path and bestow on you His undefeatable help.

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responsibilities as a Messenger of God; however, instead of saying this in clear words, he has been asked to prepare for it through extolling the glory of God, the prayer and asking forgiveness. In the verse under discussion, this subject has been discussed, keeping in view the context and occasion, in the form of very clear glad tidings. It is said that after this clear victory granted to him time is near when he will be relieved by the Almighty of the responsibility He had imposed on him, and will relieve him in such a manner that he will be held successful and triumphant in his mission and will forgive all his past and future sins. The greatest glad tidings for the Prophet (sws) could no doubt only have been that the Almighty would relieve him of his responsibilities in such a manner that he would have befittingly discharged his obligations as a Messenger and not be held responsible in the slightest way for anything left amiss, and that he would be fully assured that he had done his duty fully to the pleasure and satisfaction of his Lord. In this verse, this very news has been given to him in a certified way and there could be no greater a certification. In gratitude of this, the Prophet (sws) had greatly increased the extent of his worship in his last years; when he was asked by people that why does he go through this strenuous routine when all his past and future sins had been forgiven, his answer would be: اَفَلَآ اَكُوْنَ عَبْدًا شَكُوْرًا (should I not be a grateful servant of my Lord?)[4]

I have explained at various places in this exegesis that the sins ascribed here to the Prophet (sws) do not refer to ones which are the result of following base desires; prophets of God never commit such sins; however, in the process of realizing their mission of establishing the dominance of religion at times because of noble motives certain things emanate from them on which they are checked by the Almighty. For example, hypocrites would come to the Prophet (sws) with various excuses so that they could be granted permission to not participate in *jihād*; the Prophet (sws) would be fully aware that these people are only making lame excuses; however, because of his gracious temperament, he would grant them permission so that they may not be disgraced. This softness from the Prophet (sws) was though a result of his graciousness and was not the result of following base desires; however, the Almighty checked him on this attitude because a prophet is a scale of justice in every matter. It is essential for him that even when dealing graciously with his followers he not exceed the limit set forth by the Almighty in this regard.

Similarly, at times, the Prophet (sws) would pamper the leaders of his nation very much thinking that if they embrace faith, this would give great strength to the whole cause. This thinking in itself was nothing sinful; in fact, it is something which is in line with the expediency required for the cause of religion; however, if this inclination becomes so pronounced that as a result of this its worthy recipients are ignored or it causes an increase in the arrogance of the unworthy, then the Almighty stops His Messenger from it. The incident of the blind man mentioned in Sūrah 'Abas is an

4. See, for example: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 380, (no. 1078).

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example of this.

Similar incidents have occurred in the lives of other prophets of God, which I have explained at relevant places of this exegesis. In the verse under consideration also, the sins attributed to the Prophet (sws) are of this nature. He was given glad tidings about all such sins that they have been forgiven.

The words "past and future" express the all embracing nature of this forgiveness. They also indicate that the blemishes before these glad tidings have also been forgiven and those after it shall also be forgiven. New glad tidings are not required for this.

The words وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكَ convey the completion of the favour of religion. Thus when this favour was completed on the occasion of the last *ḥajj*, it was declared: اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَ اَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَ رَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًا (٥:٣) (this day [for your guidance] I have completed your religion for you and completed My favour to you. I have chosen Islam to be your faith, (5:3)).

The words وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا mention the consequence of the completion of the favour of religion: in this manner will the Almighty bless him with the guidance of the true path from which Satan had lured people away. It needs to be kept in consideration here that the religion revealed by the Almighty for the guidance of mankind was lost by the Jews and Christians while the Idolaters had converted the Baytullāh built by Abraham (sws) and his son Ishmael (sws) into a place of idol worship and lost the real sign-post of guidance. As a result, the path leading to God had virtually become extinct. This path was re-opened only after the Almighty revived and completed His religion through the Prophet Muḥammad (sws), and the lighthouse of monotheism built by Abraham (sws) was once again restored to its original splendour by cleansing it from disbelief. These words point to this very reality that now religion will be restored to its pristine form and the radiant centre of *tawḥid* will also be unveiled which was built to take people to the real path of guidance.

Here these glad tidings have been given while addressing the Prophet (sws); in verse 20 of this *sūrah*, these very glad tidings are given while addressing all the Muslims. I will *inshā'Allāh* explain them there further.

In وَ يَنْصُرَكَ اللّٰهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيْزًا, the expression نَصْرٌ عَزِيْزٌ refers to that victory and help over disbelief which is unchallengeable and unassailable. Such a victory, obviously, could only have been achieved by the Prophet (sws) when the dominance of disbelief is totally done away. In other words, this could only have been achieved once the Quraysh are totally humbled and Muslims become the custodians of the Baytullāh. Till then, the successes achieved by the Muslims against the Quraysh were no less important but were not ones which could not be challenged. As long as the Quraysh were in charge of Makkah, they were indeed a force to reckon with; however, the truce of Ḥudaybiyah had really dented their power and the time was not far when their old edifice of political power would be razed to the ground. This very نَصْرٌ عَزِيْزٌ is predicted here. The word عَزِيْزٌ besides meaning dominance and ascendancy also means

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something which is unassailable.

Here the eloquence in the sequence of the glad tidings given is worthy of consideration: what was the most imminent is mentioned as the end and what was a summary of all others and destined to materialize at the end is mentioned the foremost. The reason for this, in my opinion, is that this is an occasion of giving glad tidings to the Prophet (sws). No doubt, the conquest of Makkah was great news for the Prophet (sws); however, an even greater one was to present before him the reward he would receive in the Hereafter and not much time remained when he would receive it (لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللّٰهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْۢبِكَ وَمَا تَاَخَّرَ).

هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ السَّكِيْنَةَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لِيَزْدَادُوْٓا اِيْمَانًا مَّعَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ ۭ وَلِلّٰهِ جُنُوْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ۝[5]

The help promised in the previous verse is substantiated in this one. It is only as a miraculous result of God's help that the believers showed the courage to come out with the Prophet (sws) for *'umrah* at his call so that through their courage and through the company of the Prophet (sws) they could increase the treasure of faith they already had.

It needs to be appreciated that though this journey was undertaken for *'umrah*, however, the Prophet (sws) undertook it in very dangerous circumstances. Muslims were in a perpetual state of war with the Quraysh, and till then such was their determination and resolve that the latter were attacking Madīnah every now and then. In these circumstances, it could not be expected in any way that Muslims as a group go for *'umrah* and they be easily allowed to offer it without any resistance. Consequently, it would become evident from the coming verses that the hypocrites reckoned on this very basis that the Muslims were taking themselves to destruction and this time would not be able to return home. In these circumstances, it was extra ordinary for fourteen or fifteen hundred Companions (rta) to leave their homes to travel a couple of hundred miles and that too without any weapons. However, the Almighty blessed their faith and granted them the resolve and determination for this journey. The implication is that just as the Almighty blessed the Prophet's Companions with resolve at this instance, in a similar manner he will bless them with it in later phases, and the نَصْرٌ عَزِيْزٌ promised by him is bound to be fulfilled

The expression refers to the fact that the trials which are faced by the believers in this world are meant to test their faith. If they succeed in these tests, their faith is strengthened and a stage is reached that they become the contented souls referred to by the Qur'ān, and if they fail these tests and keep on failing them, then at last a stage

5. It was He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the faithful so that their faith may grow with their faith and all the legions of the heavens and the earth belong to God and God is All-Knowing and Wise.

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may be reached in which the spark of their faith is totally extinguished.

I have been explaining this practice of God at various places in this exegesis, and an obvious consequence of this practice of God is that faith is something which is liable to increase and decrease; had it been something static, there would have been no need to test it. If it is ascribed to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah that he was not convinced of the fact that faith can increase or decrease, then it has a special context: it refers to faith in the legal sense on the basis of which a person is granted the rights of a Muslim citizen in an Islamic State. He is not referring to the levels of faith just discussed on which depends the rewards and ranks of the Hereafter. As far as faith in the legal sense is concerned, it is found in equal extent in all Muslims who believe in the essentials of Islam and an Islamic state will deal equally with them as Muslims. There shall be no difference in this respect between a urban citizen and a rural one. As far as the Hereafter is concerned, the matter there depends on the actual faith found in a person – something known only to God and He alone will decide about it. This view of Imam Abū Ḥnīfah in itself is absolutely correct; however, it is advocated in a very wrong sense and those who object to it also do not try to understand its actual background.

The words وَلِلّٰهِ جُنُوْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا imply that if the Almighty persuaded the Muslims to accompany the Prophet (sws), then He actually did a favour to them so that by doing this virtuous act they could further enhance their faith; otherwise God is not dependent on anyone to help His Messenger or His religion. All the forces of the heavens and the earth are in the control of the Almighty; whenever He wants, He can take revenge from the disbelievers through His forces. However, He by urging the believers to help His Messenger has opened the way of great reward for them. He is all-knowing and all-wise. All His actions are based on knowledge and wisdom and in this particular action of His too, there is great wisdom. If any further explanation of this subject is needed, readers may look up what I have written while explaining verse 4 of Sūrah Muḥammad. Further ahead, this verse is coming up with another aspect. There it shall be explained further.

لِّيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ۙ﴿5﴾[6]

This verse mentions the reward of لِيَزْدَادُوْٓا اِيْمَانًا مَّعَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ (so that their faith may grow with their faith) and the linguistic style adopted is permutative (*badal*). The implication is that ways opened by God to strengthen their inner radiance is because in this way He wants believing men and women to enter into gardens watered by streams; they will abide therein forever and He will remove all their sins from their

6. So that He may admit the believers, both men and women, into gardens watered by running streams. They will abide in them forever and so that He may brush away their sins and this, in God's sight, is a great triumph.

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accounts. In other words, this is not an unprofitable deal.

Here, it is possible, that a question arises in the mind of a person that entering Paradise is mentioned here first, and obliteration of sins is mentioned later even though it would only be after the latter that people would be able to enter Paradise. In my opinion, this change in order is only an apparent thing. In order to highlight the aspect of glad tidings, Paradise is mentioned first; the purpose of course is to tell us that after cleansing people of their sins will God admit people to Paradise.

The words وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا say that this is real and supreme success; so blessed are those who undertook this journey while disregarding all dangers. These words are a prelude to the mention of the Hypocrites whose mention is coming up; it is said about them that they stuck to their homes because of their fear of the Quraysh and reckoned that this step proved very successful for them and they cleverly saved themselves from a big danger. The truth of the matter is that they have not saved themselves from danger; they have in fact flung themselves into it and soon they will realize this.

وَّيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَالْمُشْرِكٰتِ الظَّآنِّيْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ؕ عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۚ وَغَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ۝[7]

This is a mention of the other aspect of faith. The very trial through which the Almighty opens the way to great success for the Muslims is instrumental in opening the way to the greatest doom for both men and women among hypocrites and the idolaters. This is because their blemishes are fully exposed and the truth is conclusively conveyed to them.

The words الظَّآنِّيْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ refer to those evil thoughts of the Hypocrites which are mentioned ahead in verse 12 thus: بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُوْلُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِيْهِمْ اَبَدًا وَّزُيِّنَ ذٰلِكَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَظَنَنْتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۖ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُوْرًا (in fact, you reckoned that the Messenger and his companions would never return to their people and this notion took roots in your hearts; and you harboured evil thoughts and at last ended up doomed).

The hypocrites and the idolaters are mentioned together because of their similarity in both head and heart. Just as an idolater in spite of claiming to be under pledge to worship God worships other Gods also, in a similar manner, a hypocrite too in spite of claiming to be under the pledge of faith and obedience to God and his Messenger connives with others as is mentioned in the verse: سَنُطِيْعُكُمْ فِيْ بَعْضِ الْاَمْرِ (٤٧:٢٦) (we shall follow you in some affairs, (47:26)). Because of this similarity, the Qur'ān has likened hypocrisy to polytheism. I have explained this aspect in my book *Ḥaqīqat-e shirk-o*

7. And that God may punish the Hypocrites and the Idolaters, men and women, who would make evil estimations about God. A turn of evil shall befall them alone and God's wrath was on them and He has cursed them and has prepared for them Hell and it is an evil abode.

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tawḥīd (The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism).[8] Here by mentioning the hypocrites with the polytheists, the Qur'ān has determined their status: such claimants to faith will at last have the same fate as the polytheists who were their compatriots and like minded to them.

The sentence عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ is parenthetical in nature. When their evil speculations and desires about the future of the Muslims were mentioned, it was said forthwith in the discourse that they are waiting for misfortunes to befall the Muslims even though these misfortunes are going to befall them because the fate of the very people they are pinning their hopes in shall come before them and they too will meet a similar fate. God's curse be on them and He has prepared Hell for them which is a very evil abode.

Here another thing is worthy of attention: women are specially mentioned together with men not only when the Muslims were referred to earlier but also when the hypocrites and the idolaters were referred to. The reason for this is that a comment is being made on the times of trial. In this very period if hypocrisy is nurtured in a group, then the wife and children have a great role in this. The following statement of the hypocrites mentioned in verse 11 also refers to this very aspect: سَيَقُوْلُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَآ اَمْوَالُنَا وَ اَهْلُوْنَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا (٤٨: ١١) (those among the Bedouins who were left behind will present this excuse to you: "we were occupied with our goods and families; so seek forgiveness for us from God.") A Ḥadīth of the Prophet (sws) also bears witness to this: اِنَّ الْوَلَدَ مَبْخَلَةٌ مَجْبَنَةٌ (indeed, the children are the ones who are the most responsible for pushing a person into miserliness and cowardice).[9] On similar lines, if faith finds firm root in the heart of a person, then the determination and perseverance of his wife and children and their trust in God have a great role. This situation entailed that in the mention of the faithful and the hypocrites, the role of women be specially mentioned so that believing as well as hypocritical women get to know the fact that neither is their Lord unaware of the sacrifices of the believing women nor of the attitude of indolence and being slaves to the pleasures of this world.

وَلِلّٰهِ جُنُوْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ۝[10]

This part is also included with a slight difference in the word عَزِيْز in verse four. In that verse, this part had a specific connotation; here it occurs to express disgust, disavowal and unconcern for the hypocrites: if they want to become the fuel of Hell, then may do so; it would only be good riddance. God is not in need of such cowardly

8. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Ḥaqīqat-e shirk-o tawḥīd*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1988), 100-114.

9. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 1209, (no. 3666).

10. And to God belong the legions of the heavens and the earth and God is Mighty and Wise.

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people; the forces of the heavens and the earth are with Him. He is the sovereign and the powerful. At the same time, he is wise also; He uses and employs these forces the way He wants to in accordance with His wisdom. The cowardliness and faintheartedness of anyone cannot influence His intentions.

Section II: Verses (8-21)

In this section, the status and position of the Prophet (sws) is first explained. After that, the obligations which the believers owe to him a result and the responsibilities which were imposed on them as a consequence of their pledge to him are specified. After that, the attitude of the hypocrites is commented upon in detail who at that time sat in their houses by putting forth false excuses. They did not go out with the Muslims to offer *'umrah* fearing that Muslims would never be able to return from this journey. After that, those valiant Muslims are mentioned who, in the absence of means and resources, pledged a covenant of *jihād* at the hands of the Prophet (sws). As a result of their sincerity and pure intention, they became worthy of God's eternal pleasure as well of His support and help in this world.

Readers may now proceed to read the verses ahead.

Text and Translation

اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّ مُبَشِّرًا وَّ نَذِيْرًا ۙ﴿۸﴾ لِّتُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖ وَ تُعَزِّرُوْهُ وَ تُوَقِّرُوْهُ ؕ وَ تُسَبِّحُوْهُ بُكْرَةً وَّ اَصِيْلًا ﴿۹﴾
اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ اِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ ؕ يَدُ اللّٰهِ فَوْقَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ۚ فَمَنْ نَّكَثَ فَاِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَ مَنْ اَوْفٰى بِمَا
عٰهَدَ عَلَيْهُ اللّٰهَ فَسَيُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۱۰﴾ سَيَقُوْلُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَآ اَمْوَالُنَا وَ اَهْلُوْنَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ
لَنَا ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ بِاَلْسِنَتِهِمْ مَّا لَيْسَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَّمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ ضَرًّا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا ؕ بَلْ
كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿۱۱﴾ بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُوْلُ وَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِيْهِمْ اَبَدًا وَّ زُيِّنَ ذٰلِكَ فِيْ
قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَ ظَنَنْتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۖ وَ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًۢا بُوْرًا ﴿۱۲﴾ وَ مَنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنْۢ بِاللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖ فَاِنَّآ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ سَعِيْرًا ﴿۱۳﴾ وَ
لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۱۴﴾ سَيَقُوْلُ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ اِذَا
انْطَلَقْتُمْ اِلٰى مَغَانِمَ لِتَاْخُذُوْهَا ذَرُوْنَا نَتَّبِعْكُمْ ۚ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّبَدِّلُوْا كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ لَّنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَا كَذٰلِكُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ
قَبْلُ ۚ فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُوْنَنَا ؕ بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۱۵﴾ قُلْ لِّلْمُخَلَّفِيْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ سَتُدْعَوْنَ اِلٰى
قَوْمٍ اُولِيْ بَاْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ تُقَاتِلُوْنَهُمْ اَوْ يُسْلِمُوْنَ ۚ فَاِنْ تُطِيْعُوْا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللّٰهُ اَجْرًا حَسَنًا ۚ وَ اِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ
يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿۱۶﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَى الْاَعْمٰى حَرَجٌ وَّ لَا عَلَى الْاَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَّ لَا عَلَى الْمَرِيْضِ حَرَجٌ ؕ وَ مَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَ
رَسُوْلَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ وَ مَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ يُعَذِّبْهُ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿۱۷﴾ لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ

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يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَاَنْزَلَ السَّكِيْنَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَّمَغَانِمَ كَثِيْرَةً يَّاْخُذُوْنَهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٩﴾ وَعَدَكُمُ اللّٰهُ مَغَانِمَ كَثِيْرَةً تَاْخُذُوْنَهَا فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هٰذِهٖ وَكَفَّ اَيْدِيَ النَّاسِ عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَلِتَكُوْنَ اٰيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ﴿٢٠﴾ وَّاُخْرٰى لَمْ تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَيْهَا قَدْ اَحَاطَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرًا ﴿٢١﴾

Indeed, We have sent you forth as a witness and as a bearer of glad tidings and an informer so that O People! You may have faith in God and His Messenger. Help the Messenger and honour him, and glorify God morning and evening. (8-9)

Those who make a pledge with you in fact make a pledge with God. The Hand of God is on their hands. So, he who breaks his oath will have to bear its evil and he who keeps his pledge with God, God shall richly recompense Him. (10)

Those among the Bedouins who were left behind will present this excuse to you: "We were occupied with our goods and families; so seek forgiveness for us from God." They say with their tongues what they do not mean in their hearts. Tell them: "Who among you has some authority over God for himself if He intends to harm or benefit you? In fact, God is aware of all what you do. In fact you reckoned that the Messenger and his companions would never return to their people and this notion took roots in your hearts. And you harboured evil thoughts and at last ended up doomed. And those who did not profess faith in God and His Messenger, We have prepared Hell for these disbelievers. And to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He will pardon whom He wishes and punishes whom He pleases and God is Forgiving and Merciful. (11-14)

When you set out to acquire the spoils, those who stayed behind will say: "Permission be granted to us also that we may come with you." They seek to change the Word of God. Tell them: "You shall certainly not come with us." So had God said to you earlier as well. Then they will reply: "In fact, you are jealous of us." In fact, it is these people who understand very little! (15)

Tell those who were left behind from among the Bedouins: "Soon you shall be called upon to fight a mighty enemy. You will have to continue fighting unless they embrace Islam. So, if you followed this directive, God will reward you well; and if you turned away, as you turned away earlier, He will inflict on you a grievous punishment." (16)

It shall be no offence for the blind, the lame, and the sick, and he who obeys God and His Messenger, God will admit him into gardens watered by running streams, and he who turns away, God shall sternly punish him. (17)

God was pleased with the faithful when they were pledging a covenant with you under the tree. So God knew what was in their hearts. Therefore He sent down tranquility upon them, and blessed them with an imminent victory and also with many spoils which they will acquire and God is Mighty and Wise. (18-19)

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God has promised you with many spoils which you will acquire. Thus He gave this to you with all promptness and withheld the hands of people from you so that this can become a source of tranquility and a sign for the Muslims and guide you to the straight path. And another victory also on which you do not have power as yet. However, God has it in His grasp and God has power over all things. (20-21)

Explanation

اِنَّاۤ اَرۡسَلۡنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيۡرًا ۙ﴿۸﴾ لِّتُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَتُعَزِّرُوۡهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوۡهُ ؕ وَتُسَبِّحُوۡهُ بُكۡرَةً وَّاَصِيۡلًا ﴿۹﴾[11]

The Prophet Muḥammad is addressed and told that the Almighty has sent him to people as a witness and as a bearer of glad tiding and warnings. "Witness" here means "witness to the religion of God" telling people what they have been forbidden and directed by Him. He has also been sent at the same time to give glad tidings of Paradise to those who accept his evidence and reform and restructure their lives and to give warnings of Hell to those who reject his witness or do not give due importance to it. Though these words are said as a general principle, yet it will become evident from the gradual progression of the discourse that these words are directed at the hypocrites who had accepted the messengerhood of Muḥammad (sws) from their tongues but were trying to find escape routes from the responsibilities this acceptance entailed.

The word شَاهِدٌ refers to one who bears witness. Here it means one who bears witness to the religion of God before people. People have generally interpreted this bearing witness to be the one which the Prophet (sws) will give on the Day of Judgement; however, in my opinion, this view is not correct. The witness borne by the messengers of God before people in the Hereafter is itself based on the witness they will bear before people in this world. I have discussed the nature of this witness while explaining verses 45-47 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. Readers who want details may look it up. The witness borne by the prophets of God in the Hereafter is discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

Muslims are addressed in لِّتُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَتُعَزِّرُوۡهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوۡهُ ؕ وَتُسَبِّحُوۡهُ بُكۡرَةً وَّاَصِيۡلًا and told that the Prophet (sws) has been sent forth to them as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings so that they profess faith in God and His Messenger, offer support and show respect to the Messenger and glorify the Almighty morning and evening. Faith here, of course, refers to true and strong faith in God and His Messenger. After that, the obvious requirements of faith are mentioned in an ascending order. The requirement of professing faith in the Prophet (sws) is stated as showing respect and helping and supporting him in his mission of establishing religion in the land in his capacity of a Messenger of God. After that the requirement of professing faith in God is stated as

11. Indeed, We have sent you forth as a witness and as a bearer of glad tidings and an informer so that O People! You may have faith in God and His Messenger. Help the Messenger and honour him, and glorify God morning and evening.

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glorifying Him morning and evening.

Generally, people have related the part وَ تُعَزِّرُوْهُ وَ تُوَقِّرُوْهُ (support and respect him) to the Almighty because they think that if the Messenger is regarded to be the antecedent of the accusative pronoun then, this would create a distance between a noun and its antecedent. In our opinion, this view is based on a misconception. Here the sequence, as is indicated earlier, is ascending; Thus, the issue of this distance does not arise. After asking the believers to profess faith in God and His Messenger, the obligation they owe to the Messenger is stated first because the Messenger was mentioned later in the sequence; thus the obligation owed to him was mentioned right after he was mentioned. After that the obligation owed to the Almighty by the believers is mentioned. This ascending order sequence is adopted by the Qur'ān at various places. Examples of this can be seen in previous *sūrahs*. If the words وَ تُعَزِّرُوْهُ وَ تُوَقِّرُوْهُ are not considered to be related to the Prophet (sws), then this would create certain problems in the discourse which it should not have. For example:

Firstly, this verse occurs in the context of mentioning the rights of the Prophet (sws). It states the purpose for which the Prophet (sws) was sent as witness to the truth and as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. However, if this interpretation is adopted, the verse is divested of its meanings which state his rights and as such is severed from its context.

Secondly, the discourse is primarily directed to the hypocrites whose real weakness was that in spite of laying claim to faith were devoid of showing obedience to the Prophet (sws) as well as in supporting his mission and befittingly showing respect and reverence (the explanation of which will follow) to him. This situation required that they be told the obvious requirements of professing faith in the Prophet (sws). If these words are not considered to be related to Prophet (sws), then the verse will be disconnected from its background and occasion.

Thirdly, the words وَ تُعَزِّرُوْهُ وَ تُوَقِّرُوْهُ are not at all appropriate to be used for God. With regard to their instances of usage, they are more appropriate to be used for the Prophet (sws). The word وَتُوَقِّرُوْه is absolutely inappropriate for the Almighty. The word تُعَزِّرُوْهُ has never been used in the Qur'ān for the Almighty. Whenever it has been used, it has been used for the Messengers. See, for example, the following verses:

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۚ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيْبًا ۭ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ ۭ لَىِٕنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِيْ وَ عَزَّرْتُمُوْهُمْ وَ اَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَّاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَ لَاُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ. (۱۲:۵)

God made a covenant with the Israelites and raised among them twelve chiefs. God said: "I shall be with you. If you adhere to your prayers and give *zakāh* and profess faith in the prophets and help them and give God a generous loan, I shall

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forgive you your sins and admit you to gardens watered by running streams." (5:12)

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ النَّبِيَّ الْاُمِّيَّ الَّذِيْ يَجِدُوْنَهٗ مَكْتُوْبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ وَالْاِنْجِيْلِ ۡ يَاْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ يَنْهٰىهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ يُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَ يُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ وَ يَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ اِصْرَهُمْ وَ الْاَغْلٰلَ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَعَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗٓ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ. (۷:۱۵۷)

Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures) in the Torah and in the *Injīl* – for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good [and pure] and prohibits them from what is bad [and impure]; he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that were upon them. So, those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent down with him – it is they who shall prosper.

Readers may look up what I have written to explain verse 25 of Sūrah Muḥammad regarding the propriety of words. There are many verses in the Qur'ān in which different verbs have been used, and merely from the verb, its subject and object can be known. This relates much to the appreciation of the language. If complete regard is not given to this, a lot of misunderstandings result in the interpretation of this verse.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ اِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ ؕ يَدُ اللّٰهِ فَوْقَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ۚ فَمَنْ نَّكَثَ فَاِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَ مَنْ اَوْفٰى بِمَا عٰهَدَ عَلَيْهُ اللّٰهَ فَسَيُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۱۰﴾[12]

This verse is a further reinforcement of the topic just discussed. It is said that people who are pledging the covenant of "to listen and to obey" at the hands of the Prophet (sws) should remember that they are not pledging a covenant at his hands; they are in fact pledging a covenant with God. While pledging a covenant, the hand which they have upon them is not the hand of the Prophet (sws); it is the hand of God. If after pledging this covenant, they evade its responsibilities and break what they had pledged in words by their very deeds and practices, then they should remember that they will have to face its evil consequences. This is because in this covenant the real person is God and no one can harm God. A person who breaches his promises he makes with God is doomed himself. This also should be kept in mind that a person who fulfills the responsibilities he has committed himself to, will never incur any loss; in fact, he will receive great reward for it from the Almighty.

12. Those who make a pledge with you in fact make a pledge with God. The Hand of God is on their hands. So, he who breaks his oath will have to bear its evil and he who keeps his pledge with God, God shall richly recompense Him.

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People have generally related this pledge to the "Pledge of Riḍwān" even though it has no bearing with it. The "Pledge of Riḍwān" is mentioned further ahead in verse 18. This verse mentions the general covenant and pledge of "to listen and to obey" which every believer has to make at the hands of the Prophet (sws). Here its exaltedness and importance and the responsibilities it entails are mentioned to incite emotions of honour in the hypocrites: they had pledged a covenant at the hands of the Prophet (sws), but when the time came for fulfilling its requirements, they have started to hide their faces. They are told that a covenant pledged with the Prophet (sws) is a covenant with God. If a person evades its responsibilities, then he is actually guilty of breeching his agreement with God. The consequence of this attitude is humiliation both in this world and in that to come.

The *ḍammah* on the genitive pronoun in the word عَلَيْهُ has invited objections from the Orientalists on the syntax of Qur'ānic Arabic. These unfortunate people do not know that the books of syntax are no judge on the style and declensions of Qur'ānic Arabic; it is actually the reverse: the Qur'ān is a judge on books of syntax. The Qur'ān is the most perfect example of the pure and unadulterated language of the Quraysh, and is protected in all aspects. For this reason, if any of it appears to be against known principles of syntax, then this will be no error on its part; on the other hand, this will be regarded as a shortcoming of the data analyzed by the grammarians. Sībawayh is the Imām of Arabic syntax and my mentor, Imām Farāhī, also regards him to be so; however, in spite of this, he, in the light of the Qur'ān, has criticized many of Sībawayh's inferences and concluded that the conventional and customary style is the one which the Qur'ān has adopted and not what Sībawayh has regarded.

In classical eloquent Arabic, at times, the requirements of the beat and rhythm cause a change in words, letters and pronouns. So if a person has mere bookish knowledge of Arabic, he cannot be comprehensive in collating them. Take for example the case of pronouns. There are numerous examples in the Qur'ān in which a pronoun has become part of a word. There is no other reason for this other than beat and rhythm. Thus for example in verse 111 of Sūrah al-A'rāf occurs the expression اَرْجِهْ وَاَخَاهُ (defer him and his brother at the moment). Similarly, in verse 52 of Sūrah al-Nūr occur the words: يَخْشَ اللّٰهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ (fears God and becomes God-conscious).

Just as the vowel sound of *ḍammah* appears strange to people in the verse under discussion, a precisely similar situation appears in verse 63 of Sūrah al-Kahf: وَمَآ اَنْسٰنِيْهُ اِلَّا الشَّيْطٰنُ (٦٣:١٨) (it was Satan who made me forget to mention this, (18:63)). Here the purpose is not to comprehensively gather all such examples. Those who are interested to do more research on the subject will find more examples in the last group of the Qur'ān in which merely because of the beat and rhythm the structure of letters, words and pronouns have been altered so much that grammarians do not find any reason for it. Here also the situation is no different.

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سَيَقُوْلُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَآ اَمْوَالُنَا وَاَهْلُوْنَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ بِاَلْسِنَتِهِمْ مَّا لَيْسَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۭ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَّمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـــًٔا اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ ضَرًّا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا ۭ بَلْ كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿١١﴾[13]

This verse mentions the real thing for which a prelude was given earlier. It is said that when the Prophet (sws) will safely return to his home after this journey, those among the Bedouins who had stayed behind will come over to him and present their excuse. They will say that their responsibilities towards their livestock as well as their involvements in providing for their families were the reason that they were not fortunate enough to go with him. They will ask him to pray to God for their forgiveness because they could not help but staying back. It is said that this excuse put forth by them is not worthy at all; they are saying something from their tongues which is not in their hearts.

The words قُلْ فَمَنْ يَّمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـــًٔا اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ ضَرًّا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا tell the Prophet (sws) to ask them that if such is the importance of their interests that because of them they are ready to ignore the rights of God and His Messenger, then they should speak up that if God wants to harm them or give them some benefit, who can stop Him?

Consider next the words: بَلْ كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا.Their implication is that they should not hide behind baseless excuses. God is fully aware of their hidden feats as well.

Here, the word مُخَلَّفُوْنَ is used for the hypocrites which means people who had been left behind even though they were the ones who had chosen to stay behind. I have already explained this in Sūrah al-Tawbah while commenting on the hypocrites and the battle of Tabūk: when the political acumen of these people led them to opt out, the Almighty too threw them behind. In Sūrah al-Ṣaff, the words used are: فَلَمَّا زَاغُوْٓا اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ (٥:٦١) (and when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray, (61:5)). Here in the verse under discussion it is said that when these people because of their cowardliness did not come ahead, the Almighty pushed them back. These people mostly belonged to the suburban villages of Madīnah. For this reason, the word used for them is A'rāb which is common for Bedouins.

In the expression: قُلْ فَمَنْ يَّمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـــًٔا اِنْ, the word يَمْلِكُ encompasses the meaning of يَمْنَعُ as is evident from the preposition مِنْ. While translating, I have kept this aspect in consideration.

بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُوْلُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِيْهِمْ اَبَدًا وَّزُيِّنَ ذٰلِكَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَظَنَنْتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۚ وَكُنْتُمْ

13. Those among the Bedouins who were left behind will present this excuse to you: "We were occupied with our goods and families; so, seek forgiveness for us from God." They say with their tongues what they do not mean in their hearts. Tell them: "Who among you has some authority over God for himself if He intends to harm or benefit you? In fact, God is aware of all what you do.

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قَوْمًا بُوْرًا ﴿١٢﴾[14]

This is an explanation of the secret referred to in the previous verse: the real thing that had stopped them was their thought that this time the Muslims would be totally decimated by the Quraysh, and they and their Prophet (sws) would never be able to return to their families.

The words وَ زُيِّنَ ذٰلِكَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ refer to the fact that since this notion of theirs was very dear to them, they adorned their hearts with it, and in accordance with the practice of God, it was endeared to them. Under its influence, they made many evil speculations about Islam, and reckoned that in a few days it shall be totally routed.

The words وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُوْرًا allude to the fact that they awaited the destruction of Islam and the Muslims. However, God, much to their chagrin, blessed Muslims with "a clear victory." In fact, they, who were very proud that by not supporting the Prophet (sws) they had taken a wise political step, have doomed themselves.

The word بُوْرٌ is the plural of بَائِرٌ. It means "the destroyed ones."

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنْۢ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ فَاِنَّاۤ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ سَعِيْرًا ﴿١٣﴾[15]

In this verse, the Almighty has delivered His verdict about the Hypocrites who in spite of laying claim to faith are such cowards in fulfilling the rights of God and His Prophet (sws), and instead of desiring the dominance of Islam are so desirous of its destruction that they cannot be regarded as ones who have professed faith in God and His Prophet (sws); they are disbelievers and these disbelievers should remember that God has prepared Hell for them.

وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٤﴾[16]

They should also remember that no one will be able to save them from God's grasp. To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; no one else shares this kingdom with Him. He will forgive those He wants to and punish those He wants to.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا say that everyone should rest assured that God is forgiving and merciful. He does not want to catch people and punish them; He wants to show mercy to them. For this reason, people instead of trying to find false supports should find the way to earn His pleasure which He has opened for people through His Prophet (sws).

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14. In fact you reckoned that the Messenger and his companions would never return to their people and this notion took roots in your hearts. And you harboured evil thoughts and at last ended up doomed.

15. And those who did not profess faith in God and His Messenger, We have prepared Hell for these disbelievers.

16. And to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He will pardon whom He wishes and punishes whom He pleases and God is Forgiving and Merciful.

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سَيَقُوْلُ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ اِذَا انْطَلَقْتُمْ اِلٰى مَغَانِمَ لِتَاْخُذُوْهَا ذَرُوْنَا نَتَّبِعْكُمْ ۚ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّبَدِّلُوْا كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ ۭ قُلْ لَّنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَا كَذٰلِكُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُوْنَنَا ۭ بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿١٥﴾[17]

The verse implies that though at this instance these people stayed behind by presenting an excuse, yet when in future there would arise instances when immense war booty might come the way of Muslims without even waging war, they will come to the Prophet (sws) feigning bravery and asking permission to take them along. In this manner, they would want to change the decision God has made about them and also receive the war booty without endangering themselves. The Prophet (sws) is told that when such an instance arises, he should tell them that they cannot go along with the Muslims: God had given a similar directive to them earlier; but at that time they sat in their homes; so why are they so anxious now in coming along with them.

The words اِلٰى مَغَانِمَ لِتَاْخُذُوْهَا refer to the bounties of Khaybar etc which became available to the Muslims after the truce of Ḥudaybiyah. Muslims did not have to wage any war to acquire these war booties. In fact, the enemy being over-awed by them left the field to them. The Jews of Khaybar were very affluent. As a result, the Muslims were able to lay hands on a lot of war booty. It is evident from the word لِتَاْخُذُوْهَا that it is as if Muslims actually came out of their houses to take the war booty without waging any war.

The words يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّبَدِّلُوْا كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ refer to the fact that these Hypocrites by making this offer at this instance would want that the word of God be changed which He had said about them. This refers to what God has said about them in verse six earlier: وَ يُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَ الْمُشْرِكٰتِ الظَّآنِّيْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ؕ عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۚ وَ غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَعَنَهُمْ وَ اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَ سَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا (and that He may punish the Hypocrites and the Idolaters, men and women, who would make evil estimations about God; a turn of evil shall befall them and God is angry with them and he has cursed them and has prepared for them Hell and it is an evil abode.) In other words, these people wanted that they do nothing for the cause of religion yet still reap the benefits of both the Herein and the Hereafter; however, this desire of theirs shall not be fulfilled; they cannot change the word of God in this matter unless they adapt and change themselves in accordance with the true requirements of religion.

The words قُلْ لَّنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَا كَذٰلِكُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ imply that if they seek permission from the Prophet (sws) to go out with him, they should not be given this permission; he should explicitly refuse this permission. God had given them a similar directive earlier but they did not obey it and cowardly stuck to their homes. In my opinion, this refers to

17. When you set out to acquire the spoils, those who stayed behind will say: "Permission be granted to us also that we may come with you." They seek to change the Word of God. Tell them: "You shall certainly not come with us." So had God said to you earlier as well. Then they will reply: "In fact, you are jealous of us." In fact, it is these people who understand very little!

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the general call given by the Prophet (sws) to offer *'umrah*; however, these hypocrites, as is evident from the afore-mentioned details, evaded this call. The implied meaning is that before this they have desisted to go out with the Prophet (sws) of God; so why are they so anxious now to go out now? Is it because they think that this time they will easily rout the enemy without any danger?

Some people are of the opinion that the statement of the hypocrites referred to in كَذٰلِكُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ is the one which is mentioned in verse 82 of Sūrah al-Tawbah. However, this view is not tenable. Sūrah al-Tawbah mentions those hypocrites who had shown cowardliness at the time of the battle of Tabūk. This battle took place a few years after the truce of Ḥudaybiyah, and here the reference is to an incident which took place before the truce of Ḥudaybiyah. The words مِن قَبْلُ (before that) clearly point to this.

فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُوْنَنَا ؕ بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا: Though these hypocrites will disgruntle a lot at not being given permission, and will throw the blame on Muslims of being jealous of them; however, this blame should be ignored because these people are very foolish. Because of their foolishness, they want to reap all the benefits in the name of religion both in this world and in that to come without making any sacrifice. It should now remain clear to them that their childish desires will never be fulfilled.

قُلْ لِّلْمُخَلَّفِيْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ سَتُدْعَوْنَ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ اُولِيْ بَاْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ تُقَاتِلُوْنَهُمْ اَوْ يُسْلِمُوْنَ ۚ فَاِنْ تُطِيْعُوْا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللّٰهُ اَجْرًا حَسَنًا ۚ وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿۱۶﴾[18]

These verses present before the Hypocrites a criterion to try them: if they are really sincere to God and His Prophet (sws), then they cannot prove this sincerity by expecting to acquire the war booty without endangering themselves; the time is about to come when they will be called upon to fight a powerful enemy; they will have to fight it with the resolve that the enemy either accept Islam or the sword. If they accept this call and go out to face the enemy, then God will richly reward them; however, if they show cowardliness even at that time as they did before, then they should remember that God will give them a grievous punishment.

The words قَوْمٍ اُولِيْ بَاْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ refer to the Quraysh. In Arabia, it was only they who had such power and might so that they could be referred to in such words. Though an agreement of ceasefire had been made with them, a decisive war was essential to dislodge them as the custodians of the House of God. The objective of the Prophetic mission could not have been achieved without this.

تُقَاتِلُوْنَهُمْ اَوْ يُسْلِمُوْنَ: since the Prophet (sws) was directly sent to the Quraysh, the

18. Tell those who were left behind from among the Bedouins: "Soon you shall be called upon to fight a mighty enemy. You will have to continue fighting unless they embrace Islam. So, if you followed this directive, God will reward you well; and if you turned away, as you turned away earlier, He will inflict on you a grievous punishment."

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Almighty raised him from among them so that in their own tongue he could conclusively communicate the truth to them. Hence they were only faced with two options: to ether accept Islam or face the sword. People of other religions could be made *dhimmīs* or *mu'āhids* but for the Ishmaelites, no such option existed. They could not even be made slaves. I have already written in detail on this specific case of the Ishmaelites in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Tawbah.

The words وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ say that if at this instance also they show cowardice the way they had done so at the time of offering the *'umrah*, then they should remember that they shall face the same grievous penalty as the one the Almighty has ordained for open enemies of Islam.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْاَعْمٰى حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْاَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيْضِ حَرَجٌ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ يُعَذِّبْهُ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٧﴾[19]

This is a mention of the handicapped whose non-participation in *jihād* would not be regarded as hypocrisy. The verse says that the blind, the lame and the sick will not be blamed for this on the condition that they obey God and His Prophet (sws) with full sincerity. If they continue to do so, then their compelling circumstances which could not allow them to serve religion will not deprive them of Paradise; In fact, God will admit them into Paradise, and if they desist from God and His Prophet (sws), then they too will face the grievous punishment which is destined for other disbelievers and enemies of Islam.

These handicapped people are also mentioned in verses 91-93 of Sūrah al-Tawbah. Readers may look up these verses; there certain aspects have been explained which have not been explained here.

لَقَدْ رَضِىَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَاَنْزَلَ السَّكِيْنَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَّمَغَانِمَ كَثِيْرَةً يَّاْخُذُوْنَهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٩﴾[20]

After mentioning the people who shirked their responsibilities viz. a viz. the covenant they had pledged at the hands of the Prophet (sws), those people are mentioned who in very dangerous circumstances not only made a pledge of *jihād* at the hands of the Prophet (sws) at Ḥudaybiyah but also duly fulfilled their

19. It shall be no offence for the blind, the lame, and the sick, and he who obeys God and His Messenger, God will admit him into gardens watered by running streams, and he who turns away, God shall sternly punish him.

20. God was pleased with the faithful when they were pledging a covenant with you under the tree. So, God knew what was in their hearts. Therefore He sent down tranquillity upon them, and blessed them with an imminent victory and also with many spoils which they will acquire and God is Mighty and Wise.

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responsibilities towards it. Their mention begins by the words لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ which show that the mere act of pledging a covenant at the hands of the Prophet (sws) had made the Almighty so happy about these valiant people that He declared His eternal pleasure for them. Thus this pledge is known as the Pledge of Riḍwān in Islamic history. In the introduction to this *sūrah*, I have referred to the circumstances in which the Prophet (sws) took this pledge and the great enthusiasm in which Muslims gave this pledge right in the heart of enemy territory. Readers may look it up.

إِذْ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ: it is evident that this pledge took place below an acacia tree. The word الشَّجَرَةِ refers to that very tree. This reference is meant to bring to light the circumstances of deprivation and frailty in which this great event of Islamic history took place.

فَعَلِمَ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَاَنْزَلَ السَّكِيْنَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ: the number of Muslims who made this pledge were not more than fourteen to fifteen hundred. Because of the restrictions of the *'umrah*, they were unarmed as well. Only to defend the honour of their religion and relying on the immense help of God they had got ready to challenge the might of the Quraysh. Who else but God, in these circumstances, would have known their inner state of attention to God and seeking forgiveness from Him? While referring to this, it is said that God was aware of their situation, and in order to pamper and comfort them blessed them with assurance and mental peace. This is in accordance with the practice of God which I have been mentioning at various places of this exegesis: when the servants of God get ready to wage *jihād* for His cause, then however much adverse the circumstances may be, the Almighty instills courage in them and it is this encouragement which is the real power that the most powerful of enemies cannot defeat.

The words وَاَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا. وَّمَغَانِمَ كَثِيْرَةً يَّاْخُذُوْنَهَا refer to the victory of Khaybar and to that war booty which was acquired by the Muslims right after returning from Ḥudaybiyah, and which deeply assured the Muslims that the promises of help made by God would be fulfilled and that the agreement of Ḥudaybiyah was not their defeat but their clear victory and that this clear victory will *inshā'Allāh* prove to be the prelude to the conquest of Makkah.

In the verse وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا, the Almighty has referred to His attributes which is a guarantee of the fact that all His promises shall necessarily be fulfilled. Even if the apparent circumstances may appear very unfavorable, yet God's power and wisdom dominates everything.

وَعَدَكُمُ اللّٰهُ مَغَانِمَ كَثِيْرَةً تَاْخُذُوْنَهَا فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هٰذِهٖ وَكَفَّ اَيْدِيَ النَّاسِ عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَلِتَكُوْنَ اٰيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ﴿٢٠﴾[21]

21. God has promised you with many spoils which you will acquire. Thus He gave this to you with all promptness and withheld the hands of people from you so that this can become a

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The above verse was addressed to the Prophet (sws). This verse addresses the Muslims: God has promised them with a lot of war booty which they will acquire in the near future; to substantiate the fulfillment of this promise, He gave them this immediate war booty so that it may be a means of their assurance and a sign of the dominance of Islam.

Our exegetes have interpreted the words فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هٰذِهٖ to refer to the conquest of Khaybar, and this inference seems correct to me because the conquest of Khaybar took place immediately after the incident of Ḥudaybiyah.

The word النَّاسِ in وَ كَفَّ اَيْدِيَ النَّاسِ عَنْكُمْ refers to the Quraysh. In the agreement of Ḥudaybiyah both Muslims and the Quraysh had consented to the restriction that they will not wage war against one another for ten years. The benefit which the Muslims received as a result was that it secured a good chance for themselves to wage war against the Jews of Khaybar, and these Jews gave up very early because they knew that they would not be able to get the support of the Quraysh. In a similar manner, the agreement of Ḥudaybiyah opened up the way to another imminent victory, and it thus was proven that this agreement was not a defeat for the Muslims but the prelude to a great conquest as well as to other great victories in the future.

The conjugate clause of وَ لِتَكُوْنَ اٰيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ is suppressed as per the customary principles of Arabic language: The Almighty blessed the Muslims with the immediate war booty of Khaybar so that it becomes evident to them that the agreement of Ḥudaybiyah was a clear victory (*fatḥ mubīn*) for them and also be a sign for the Muslims of the dominance and sovereignty of Islam in the future.

The words وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا are also appended in verse two of this *sūrah* and there I have explained that they refer to the fact that time is near when the Almighty will bless them with the favour of completion of religion, and will open for His servants that straight path of guidance which had been closed by the enemies of the truth. Since the House of God was the real landmark of this straight path, the glad tiding of its liberation from the possession of disbelievers are also concealed in these words.

وَّاُخْرٰى لَمْ تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَيْهَا قَدْ اَحَاطَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرًا ﴿۲۱﴾[22]

This refers to the conquest of Makkah. The verse say that there is another success which the Almighty has promised them; though Muslims have yet to achieve it; however, it is not far off. God has it in His control and when this is so, then nothing can evade His grasp. God has power over everything. He will soon bring about this victory through His support.

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source of tranquillity and a sign for the Muslims and guide you to the straight path.

22. And another victory also on which you do not have power as yet. However, God has it in His grasp and God has power over all things.

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Section III: Verses (22-26)

In the succeeding verses, Muslims are assured that if the Quraysh had waged war at this instance, they would have been routed; however, it was the wisdom of God that did not allow war to ensue so that no harm should come to Muslims who were trapped in Makkah. In this regard, the moral superiority of the Muslims is highlighted which they won against the disbelievers at this time. It became evident from this that the affiliation the Quraysh had shown to emotional frenzy had little time to live on.

Readers may now recite the succeeding verses.

Text and Translation

وَلَوْ قٰتَلَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوَلَّوُا الْاَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٢٢﴾ سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَلَنْ
تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ كَفَّ اَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَاَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ اَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ
وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا ﴿٢٤﴾ هُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْيَ مَعْكُوْفًا اَنْ يَّبْلُغَ مَحِلَّهٗ ؕ وَلَوْ
لَا رِجَالٌ مُّؤْمِنُوْنَ وَنِسَآءٌ مُّؤْمِنٰتٌ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوْهُمْ اَنْ تَطَئُوْهُمْ فَتُصِيْبَكُمْ مِّنْهُمْ مَّعَرَّةٌۢ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ لِيُدْخِلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ
مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوْا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٢٥﴾ اِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ حَمِيَّةَ
الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَاَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوٰى وَكَانُوْٓا اَحَقَّ بِهَا وَاَهْلَهَا ؕ وَكَانَ
اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿٢٦﴾

And if these people who have disbelieved had waged war against you, they would have shown their backs. Then they would not have found any one to protect or help them. This is an established practice of God which is continuing from before and you shall find no change in the practice of God. (22-23)

And it was He who withheld their hands from you and yours from them in the valley of Makkah after He had given you dominance over them and God was watching whatever you were doing. (24)

And it is they who disbelieved and stopped you from the Sacred Mosque and also prevented the sacrificial animals from reaching their destination. But for the fear that you might have trampled underfoot believing men and women unknowingly and thus because of them incurred blame without knowing, [We would have permitted you to fight them; however God did not permit this so that] He may admit to His mercy whom He wants to. And had those people been separated from them, We would have punished these people more grievously than the disbelievers. (25)

And remember the time when the disbelievers engendered bigotry in themselves– the bigotry to emotional frenzy. So God sent down His tranquility on His Messenger and on the faithful and bound them by the word of piety and they were worthy and

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deserving of it. And God has knowledge of all things. (26)

Explanation

وَلَوْ قٰتَلَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوَلَّوُا الْاَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٢٢﴾[23]

This is an assurance to the Muslims and a warning to the Quraysh: if God did not permit the Muslims to wage war at Ḥudaybiyah, then this was not because there was any fear of their defeat; had war ensued, their enemies would have shown their backs and not the Muslims and would have run way from the battlefield in a manner that they would have found no one to give refuge to them. So there is no room for the Quraysh to become conceited as a result of this agreement and to regard it to be a sign of weakness of the Muslims. The Quraysh, on the contrary, should be grateful to God that they have been granted an opportunity by God to reflect on the circumstances.

سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ﴿٢٣﴾[24]

This is a reference to the divine practice which the Almighty has prescribed for those who deny the Messengers of God: when the truth is conclusively communicated to them, they are totally routed and are not able to find any refuge anywhere. So relentless and unassailable is this practice of God that never does any change occur in it. The history of all the messengers of God bears witness to it.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ كَفَّ اَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَاَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ اَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا ﴿٢٤﴾[25]

The expression بَطْنِ مَكَّةَ refers to Ḥudaybiyah. It is situated right in the valley of Makkah and thus has been referred to in these words.

The verse says that if at this instance a battle did not take place, then this was the result of God's planning. Though the Almighty had granted Muslims dominance over them and if a battle had taken place they would surely have been routed; however, God's wisdom did not allow this battle to take place and hence He made the Muslims withhold their hands from the Quraysh and vice versa.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا imply that the Almighty was assessing the situation; hence whatever happened, happened as per God's wisdom and in it lies the betterment of the Muslims.

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23. And if these people who have disbelieved had waged war against you, they would have shown their backs. Then they would not have found any one to protect or help them.

24. This is an established practice of God which is continuing from before and you shall find no change in the practice of God.

25. And it was He who withheld their hands from you and yours from them in the valley of Makkah after He had given you dominance over them and God was watching whatever you were doing.

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The words مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ اَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ express that Muslims were morally superior to their opponents and also that they had stronger determination and resolve than them. It should be kept in mind that when the Quraysh were informed of the zeal and enthusiasm of the Muslims which they had shown while making the pledge at the hands of the Prophet (sws), they were quite dismayed. They thus immediately sent a delegation to strike an accord of peace. This delegation did try to show that they were not perturbed at the Muslim sentiments but it was plainly evident that they did not have the guts and courage to fight the Muslims. Hence, of their own accord, they acceded to this statute in the agreement that when the Muslims will come over the next year to offer *'umrah*, they will vacate Makkah for three days to avoid any clash with them.

هُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْيَ مَعْكُوْفًا اَنْ يَّبْلُغَ مَحِلَّهٗ ؕ وَلَوْلَا رِجَالٌ مُّؤْمِنُوْنَ وَنِسَآءٌ مُّؤْمِنٰتٌ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوْهُمْ اَنْ تَطَئُوْهُمْ فَتُصِيْبَكُمْ مِّنْهُمْ مَّعَرَّةٌۢ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ لِيُدْخِلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوْا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿۲۵﴾[26]

This verse states the divine wisdom for not letting a war to ensue at that instance: though the excesses committed by the Quraysh were quite blatant as they rejected the call of the true faith and stopped the believers from entering the House of God and did not allow the sacrificial animals to reach their destination. However, in spite of all this misconduct, it was God's wisdom which did not allow Muslims to lift arms against them.

The greatest reason for this was that there were many believing men and women in Makkah about which Muslims were not aware of. There was a chance that had the Muslims launched an offensive, these innocent Muslims too would have been put to the sword together with the Quraysh and as a result they would become guilty of killing their own brethren.

The second reason for this was that there were many Makkans who though had not embraced faith but were quite close to doing so. The Almighty willed to envelop them in His mercy.

The words لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوْا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا say that had the believers separated themselves from the disbelievers, the Almighty would have inflicted a grievous penalty on the disbelievers.

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26. And it is they who disbelieved and stopped you from the Sacred Mosque and also prevented the sacrificial animals from reaching their destination. But for the fear that you might have trampled underfoot believing men and women unknowingly and thus because of them incurred blame without knowing, [We would have permitted you to fight them; however God did not permit this so that] He may admit to His mercy whom He wants to. And had those people been separated from them, We would have punished these people more grievously than the disbelievers.

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This grievous penalty can refer to the onslaught of the Muslims as well as to something similar to the punishment which visited the previous nations. It has been shown in this exegesis that when they rejected their respective messengers, the Almighty separated the believers from them and destroyed the rest of the nation.

It is very evident from this verse that if Muslims have to wage war against a nation in which there are some Muslims, then they should try their best that no harm comes to them. However, if the enemy tries to take advantage of this situation by for example bringing forth its Muslim combatants to fight against the warring Muslims or using them as a human shield to protect themselves or if these Muslims among the enemy because of their national affiliation or some worldly interest come out to fight the attacking Muslims, then in these circumstances the collective interest of the Muslims will have to be kept in consideration even though this may cause harm to some faction of the Muslims.

The word هَدْیَ here is qualified by the word مَعْکُوْفًا to show the delicate nature of the situation: in spite of the fact that the Quraysh put up a very insolent attitude by not letting the sacrificial gifts brought for the king of the world reach their destination and they could not end up at the place of sacrifice, the wisdom of the Almighty entailed that the Quraysh not be punished for this insolence so that the Muslims who are stranded among them are not harmed in any way.

The answer to the conditional particle لَو (if) in وَلَوْلَا رِجَالٌ مُّؤْمِنُوْنَ is suppressed and this suppression points to the intense anger of the speaker. I have been explaining this style at various places in this exegesis.

The last part of the verse لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوْا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا has unfolded this suppression.

In the expression لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوْهُمْ اَنْ تَطَئُوْهُمْ the words أَن تَطَئُوْ are a *badal* (permutative) from the accusative pronoun هُمْ ie. "There was chance that you would rout them without knowing." In this manner, they would be responsible for spilling the blood of their own brethren.

اِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ حَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ سَكِيْنَتَهٗ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَاَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوٰى وَكَانُوْٓا اَحَقَّ بِهَا وَاَهْلَهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۲۶﴾[27]

This verse highlights the moral superiority of the Muslims: even though the Quraysh exhibited their inclination to emotional frenzy at every step which could have incited the Muslims, yet the Almighty blessed His Prophet (sws) and the Muslims

27. And remember the time when the disbelievers engendered bigotry in themselves– the bigotry to emotional frenzy. So, God sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and on the faithful and bound them by the word of piety and they were worthy and deserving of it. And God has knowledge of all things.

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with the grace and urge to face these delicate circumstances with great patience and deep deliberation and to not being led by the indecent behavior of the enemy into taking any step that was against the will of God and the interest of religion.

The word سَكِيْنَت means patience, forbearance, wisdom and sobriety. In collective affairs, there arise many occasions in which the forbearance and wisdom of a group is strongly tested. At such instances, if the group while being provoked by the attitude of the enemy takes a hasty step, then this causes irreparable damage to the real objective. It is purely because of God's grace that such trials are befittingly faced by a group and its leaders, and this urge to do so is only afforded to people who remain attached to their Lord in all circumstances.

The words حَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ refer to the various steps taken by the Quraysh against the norms of truth and justice to merely satisfy their ego. Some of the were:

– They were fully aware that the Prophet (sws) had only come to Makkah to offer *'umrah*; the intention of any war was neither there nor were he and his companions armed for this purpose. In spite of this, they did not permit him to visit the House of God and offer animals for sacrifice brought for Him.

– They not only did not show any respect to the envoys which were sent by the Prophet (sws) to inform them of his arrival but also went after killing one of them, and dealt with the other one in such a hesitant fashion that the rumor spread among the Muslims that they had also killed him.

– While negotiating the conditions of the truce of Ḥudaybiyah, they created such complexities and insisted on such conditions which could not give them any political benefit; they only temporarily assured them that they had the upper hand.

The natural reaction of the Muslims on this attitude of the Quraysh would have been to retaliate strongly; however, the سَكِيْنَت revealed by God to them made them content and satisfied on the decision of God and His Prophet (sws).

The words وَاَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوٰى say that in spite of this inciting behaviour from the Quraysh, the Almighty made the Muslims follow the slogan of virtue (كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوٰى). This refers to the acknowledgement of the devoted Companions of the Prophet (sws): رَضِيْتُ بِاللّٰهِ رَبًّا وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ رَسُوْلًا وَبِالْاِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا (I am happy that God is the Lord, Muḥammad the Messenger and Islam the religion.)[28] It is this slogan which has remained the shield of the sincere and truthful Muslims against the evil suggestions of Satan and his agents. Whenever circumstances arose in which Muslims thought that the decision of the Prophet (sws) was against their interest, they regarded it to be a latent suggestion of their souls and then got rid of it while confessing it to be a suggestion only. It is this great slogan which became the shield for the Muslims in these delicate circumstances and they remained happy with the decision of their Messenger even though their desires were different.

28. See, for example: Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 290, (no. 386).

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The implication of the words وَكَانُوْٓا اَحَقَّ بِهَا وَاَهْلَهَا is that persevering on this slogan is not something which can be attained by everyone who lays claim to it; only those are able to acquire this who deserve it and are worthy of it. Since the Companions of the Prophet (sws) deserved it and were worthy of it, the Almighty kept them resolute in delicate circumstances also. The Almighty does not allow the faith of people to go waste who duly value their faith, and try to remain steadfast on it in all circumstances.

The words وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا imply that God is not unaware of the circumstances of His people. He is aware of the trials they are put through and has knowledge of all the situations and sentiments they pass through. If people keep fulfilling their required obligations, the Almighty does not leave them alone; He helps and supports them at every step.

Section IV: Verses (27-29)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. It is first said that the dream seen by the Prophet (sws) was true. A delay in its materialization was based on God's wisdom. After that the predictions found in the Torah and the Gospel of the dominance of the Muslims are referred to so that not only Muslims receive assurance but also try to inculcate in themselves the qualities and traits which are mentioned about them in the previous scriptures.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to read the succeeding verses.

Text and Translation

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ رَسُوْلَهُ الرُّءْيَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ لَتَدْخُلُنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ اٰمِنِيْنَ ۙ مُحَلِّقِيْنَ رُءُوْسَكُمْ وَ مُقَصِّرِيْنَ ۙ لَا تَخَافُوْنَ ؕ فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا ﴿٢٧﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَ دِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا ﴿٢٨﴾ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ الَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗٓ اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرٰىهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَّبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رِضْوَانًا ۫ سِيْمَاهُمْ فِيْ وُجُوْهِهِمْ مِّنْ اَثَرِ السُّجُوْدِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ ۚۖ وَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْاِنْجِيْلِ ۚۛ كَزَرْعٍ اَخْرَجَ شَطْئَهٗ فَاٰزَرَهٗ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوٰى عَلٰى سُوْقِهٖ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيْظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ؕ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٢٩﴾

God showed His Messenger a true dream: Indeed, if God wills, you shall definitely enter the Sacred Mosque in peace with hair shaven or shortened; you will have no fear. He knew what you knew not. So, before this He blessed you with an imminent victory. It is He Who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true Faith so that He may make it prevail over all religions and sufficient is God as a witness. (27-28)

Muhammad is God's Messenger and those who are with him are stern to the

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disbelievers but merciful to one another. You will find them ardently kneeling and prostrating to seek God's grace and pleasure. They can be distinguished by marks of prostration on their faces. Thus is their example in the Torah and in the Gospel their example is like a sown land which puts forth its shoot and supports it; then it became strong and firm upon its stalk, delighting the farmers so that it enrages the disbelievers through it. God has promised those from these people who embraced faith and did good deeds forgiveness and a rich reward. (29)

Explanation

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ رَسُوْلَهُ الرُّءْيَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ لَتَدْخُلُنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ اٰمِنِيْنَ ۙ مُحَلِّقِيْنَ رُءُوْسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِيْنَ ۙ لَا تَخَافُوْنَ ۭ فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا ﴿٢٧﴾[29]

It has been indicated earlier that this *'umrah* was undertaken by the Prophet (sws) on the basis of a dream shown to him and for this reason people were expecting that this journey of theirs would be fruitful; however, when the result came out to be contrary to these expectations, the question arose in the minds of many that when the dream of a prophet cannot be false, how come they had to return without achieving the objective. It was in response to this question that the various aspects of wisdom behind the truce of Arabia were delineated earlier. Here, at the end, this dream is specially referred to and asserted that this God-inspired dream is absolutely true and certain to materialize. No one should doubt its truth. God willing, Muslims will soon enter the Sacred Mosque with hairs of their heads shaven or shortened and they will never have fear of any hindrance from anyone. The implication is that as a result of this agreement, *'umrah* has become possible for them; the only difference is that they will be blessed with this opportunity the following year and this delay is not against the dream shown because the dream never said that this *'umrah* shall be necessarily offered this year. Thus, when once this very question was posed to the Prophet (sws), he replied in similar terms. In other words, what was promised in the dream was not negated; the ground was laid this year that it be offered the next without any danger. The word بِالْحَقِّ relates to the word الرُّءْيَا (dream). In other words, the dream was not a baseless one: it was absolutely true.

Shaving the hair of the head or shortening it is among the etiquette of *ḥajj* and *'umrah*. I have already explained its philosophy and underlying wisdom. Shaving the head earns more reward yet shortening it is permitted too keeping in view the circumstances. Thus both are mentioned. The implication is that this caravan would consist of pilgrims of both types who will, God willing, enter the Sacred Mosque with

29. God showed His Messenger a true dream: Indeed, if God wills, you shall definitely enter the Sacred Mosque in peace with hair shaven or shortened; you will have no fear. He knew what you knew not. So, before this He blessed you with an imminent victory.

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this symbol of humility and servility without any fear or danger.

The words فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا refer to the aspects of wisdom in the delay incurred in offering *'umrah*, as referred to in verse 25. These expediencies were not in the knowledge of the people but were in the knowledge of God; thus He did not wish that Muslims offer the *'umrah* this year by defeating the Prophet (sws); however, His wisdom entailed that they go out for *'umrah* this year as well so that He bless them with an "imminent victory" (فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا) which will pave the way for further victories and also provide them with the opportunity of offering *'umrah* in peace and security.

People have generally interpreted this imminent victory to refer to the conquest of Khaybar; however in my opinion it refers to the truce of Ḥudaybiyah which in the beginning of this *sūrah* is called "a clear victory" (فَتْحٌ مُّبِيْنٌ). Readers may look up the blessings of this clear victory I have explained earlier in the light of the Qur'ān. This imminent victory was actually a prelude to the conquest of Makkah and though the latter was a bit far off, this victory paved its way. That is why it is called an imminent victory. In other words, after this imminent victory, the real victory is that of the conquest of Makkah which though has not yet materialized but God has it in His grasp as referred to in verse twenty one earlier.

هُوَ الَّذِیْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰی وَدِیْنِ الْحَقِّ لِیُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَی الدِّیْنِ كُلِّهٖ ؕ وَكَفٰی بِاللّٰهِ شَهِیْدًا ﴿۲۸﴾[30]

This verse has already passed with slight difference of words in Sūrah al-Tawbah, and is also a part of Sūrah al-Ṣaff ahead. I have explained its occasion and context and its meaning in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Tawbah. It, in other words, expresses glad tidings for the conquest of Makkah because on this conquest depended the dominance and supremacy of Islam in the whole of Arabia. Thus after this conquest, all religions which existed in Arabia, became subservient to Islam and soon the time came when the Prophet (sws) declared that two religions cannot exist together in Arabia. The verse says that the very God Who showed His majesties pointed to earlier has sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion in order to make it dominant over all religions. In other words, this is an irrevocable decision of fate: neither the Idolaters can change it nor the Jews or Christians. This decision of God shall be implemented even if they dislike it. In Sūrah al-Tawbah, this subject is discussed in the following words:

یُرِیْدُوْنَ اَنْ یُّطْفِـُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَ یَاْبَی اللّٰهُ اِلَّآ اَنْ یُّتِمَّ نُوْرَهٗ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ. هُوَ الَّذِیْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰی وَدِیْنِ الْحَقِّ لِیُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَی الدِّیْنِ كُلِّهٖ ۙ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ. (۹: ۳۲-۳۳)

30. It is He Who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true Faith so that He may make it prevail over all religions and sufficient is God as a witness.

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These [Jews and Christians] want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths; but God has decided with certainty to perfect His light, even though these disbelievers abhor it. It is He who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true religion that He may make it prevail over above all religions, even though the Idolaters abhor it. (9:32-33)

If the context of the above verses is looked into, it will become plainly evident that the first of them challenges the People of the Book, and the second of them challenges the Idolaters of Arabia. It was these two religious denominations which Islam faced in the land of Arabia. Later on, the scope of this opposition widened; however, history bears evidence that as long as Muslims adhered to Islam, the Almighty made their religion dominant at every place.

The words وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا imply that however much the opponents regard this glad tiding to be far-fetched, it is bound to materialize and God alone is sufficient to bear witness to this. Muslims are assured by these words: they should not be worried by the opposition of their opponents and the adversity of their circumstances. This promise of God will definitely be fulfilled. What is said by the words وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ and وَلَوْ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ كَرِهَ in the above cited verse of Sūrah al-Tawbah is said here in different words.

مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ الَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗۤ اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرٰىهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَّبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رِضْوَانًا ۫ سِيْمَاهُمْ فِيْ وُجُوْهِهِمْ مِّنْ اَثَرِ السُّجُوْدِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ ۚۛ وَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْاِنْجِيْلِ ۚۛ كَزَرْعٍ اَخْرَجَ شَطْـَٔهٗ فَاٰزَرَهٗ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوٰى عَلٰى سُوْقِهٖ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيْظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ؕ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۲۹﴾[31]

Here, at the end, there is a reference to the attributes of the Prophet (sws) and of His Companions (rta) as well as to the gradual dominance of Islam as mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel.

The purpose of citing this reference is to show to the Muslims how they are portrayed in the previous scriptures. In this manner, they are conveyed glad tidings and also become aware of the qualities God wants to see in them and which are the ones which will introduce them among others.

The second purpose for this citation is to warn the People of the Book that they

31. Muhammad is God's Messenger and those who are with him are stern to the disbelievers but merciful to one another. You will find them ardently kneeling and prostrating to seek God's grace and pleasure. They can be distinguished by marks of prostration on their faces. Thus is their example in the Torah and in the Gospel their example is like a sown land which puts forth its shoot and supports it; then it became strong and firm upon its stalk, delighting the farmers so that it enrages the disbelievers through it. God has promised those from these people who embraced faith and did good deeds forgiveness and a rich reward.

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must not deliberately sound as if they know nothing and also not intentionally conceal the truth. The Almighty had informed them earlier about these details so that when the time came they would bear witness to them; however, it was their misfortune that instead of bearing witness to them, they showed animosity and opposition.

The third purpose of this citation is to make evident to the Muslims that the Almighty will grant them dominance in Arabia but this would take place gradually; neither should they become impatient nor lose hope. They should patiently and diligently nurture the seed they have sown. The time will come when the Almighty will make it into such a strong and expansive tree that the whole world will seek refuge in its shade.

The expression مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ has generally been translated such that مُحَمَّدٌ is regarded to be *mubtadā'* (inchoative) and رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ to be the *khabar* (enunciative); however, in my opinion, رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ is an attribute and *'atf al-bayān*. The predicate is stated ahead as: اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ. This is an allusion to a parable mentioned in the Torah in which the whole community of the Muslims is portrayed such that Muḥammad (sws) is their chief and leader. If رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ is regarded to be the predicate thereby regarding مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ as a complete sentence so that a new sentence begins with وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَه, this eloquence of the discourse will be lost. The real majesty of this whole group will become evident only when Muḥammad is presented as its ultimate exemplar, as indeed he was.

The words وَ الَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗٓ اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ express a distinctive feature of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta): they are stern and rock-hard to the disbelievers but as soft as silk to one another. In other words, all their honour and support is faith-specific. If people who do not share their religion try to use them for their interest, they will not even be able to insert a finger between the edifice which constitutes the believers. On the other hand, they are very merciful and affectionate to the faithful. This subject is discussed in the same context in verse 54 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah thus: اَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (٥:٥٤) (who are soft towards the believers and stern towards the unbelievers, (5:54)). Since both discuss the same topic, I am reproducing below what I had written so that the real meaning of this part of the verse becomes evident in the light of the parallel verse:

> The word أَذِلَّةٌ is the plural of ذَلِيْلٌ. In Arabic, this world connotes both a positive and a negative meaning, as I have explained while writing the exegesis of verse 123 of Sūrah Āl 'Imrān. When it connotes its positive meaning, as is the case here, it means soft-spoken, gentle, obedient, humble and docile. The word ذَلُوْلٌ also occurs in this meaning. An obedient camel is called ناقة ذلول.
>
> The word أَعِزَّةٌ is the plural of عَزِيْزٌ. It is used in contrast with اَذِلَّةٌ. It means something hard, difficult, burdensome, difficult to surmount and non-docile. If it

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is said: هُوَ عَزِيْزٌ عَلَيَّ it would mean: "that thing is very burdensome for me; to control it is very difficult for me."[32]

In this regard, I had explained the meaning of شَدِيْدٌ عَلَيَّ in the following words:

Same is the meaning of شَدِيْدٌ عَلَيَّ. A beautiful couplet of a Ḥamāsī poet reads:[33]

إذا المرء أعيته المروءة ناشئا

فمطلبها كهلا عليه شديد

Idhā al-mar'u a'yathū al-marū'ah nāshi'aṇ
Fa maṭlabuhā kahlaṇ 'alayhi shadiḍ

(If a person is unable to create resolve in himself in his blooming youthful age, then acquiring it in old age is very difficult.)

In other words, the believers are very gentle, soft, harmless, flexible and adjustable for the Muslims but they are rock hard for the disbelievers. If they try to use them for their interests, they will not be able to mould them in any way … Jesus (sws) had directed his disciples to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves (Matthew, 10:16), and in this verse too both these aspects are kept in consideration.[34]

It also needs to be kept in mind that this verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah occurs in precisely the same context as the under discussion verse of Sūrah al-Fatḥ. I have explained there that the hypocrites are warned that their character is totally opposite to what an Islamic character should be. They should have been very submissive to the believers and very tough on the disbelievers; however, they have made themselves toys in the hands of the disbelievers but are very clever in deceiving the Muslims. In this *sūrah* too, it may be remembered, the character of the hypocrites has been mentioned in detail in verses 6-18. Here, at the end, this collective conduct of the Muslims is highlighted so that the hypocrites may see what their real character should be like and what they, on the contrary, are displaying: they want misfortunes to descend on the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) and keep going to the disbelievers to assure them that if they fear any danger from the Muslims, they will always support them.

By not understanding the meaning of اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ, some people were led to wrongly believe that Islam wants Muslims to be harsh and disgustful with non-Muslims in everyday life; however, neither can this attitude be derived from the Qur'ān nor can

32. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 318.
33. Al-Tabrayzī, *Dīwān al-ḥamāsah*, vol. 2, 18.
34. Ibid., vol. 2, 318-319.

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one find corroboration for it from the practice of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta). I hope that my explanation of the verse in the light of parallels will suffice to dispel this misconception.

The words فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانًا تَرٰىهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَّبْتَغُوْنَ portray their attachment with God and their fondness for waking up at night and praying to Him at the time of *tahajjud*. In other words, whoever sees them will gather on first sight that these people are totally different from the common people they come across in this world. They are a group of noble and pure souls whose real objective in life is to please God. Thus they will either be seen kneeling or prostrating. In the previous part of the verse, the aspect of their character related to their fellow brethren was highlighted; in this part of the verse, the aspect of their character highlighted is the one which relates to their Creator. In other words, their relationship with their fellow human beings exists on the right footing for they are very gentle with the righteous and very non-compromising for the wrongdoers, and their relationship with their Creator is also very strong and set on the right footing for they are never unaware of Him. And in the sight of God, the most likeable life is the one which relates to both God and His creation on the right bases; if there is any flaw in this regard, the whole life of a person turns haywire.

The words سِيْمَاهُمْ فِيْ وُجُوْهِهِمْ مِّنْ اَثَرِ السُّجُوْدِ point to their special distinctive feature: evident on their faces are the marks of prostration. It is apparent from these words that the marks referred to here are the ones which appear on the forehead because of frequent prostration. It is also evident from these words that these marks are very dear to God – so much so that He wants that in this world this *ummah* be distinguished from others by these marks. All these deductions are evident from the words of the Qur'ān; therefore, I do not regard the view of those people who have tried to metaphorically interpret the word of this part to be correct. I do not deny the fact that some people try to create these marks on their foreheads to show off; however, just because there are some people who are show-offs, one cannot belittle the status of this great distinctive feature of the believers. Just as there is a possibility to be ostentatious in this regard, this possibility exists in every big and small practice of religion.

It is evident from some narratives that 'Umar (rta) cautioned some people because they had tried to make these marks apparent on their foreheads. He was a person who was well aware of the circumstances of people. If he warned or rebuked someone on this, then this was his right as a teacher and a mentor of people and this has a specific context. This does not belittle the mark of distinction of this *ummah* mentioned in this verse.

The words ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ say that this parable of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) has been mentioned in the Torah. This is a reference to the predictions about the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) found in the Torah, the Psalms and in the scriptures of the Prophet Isaiah (sws) even though the Jews had altered and completely distorted them, and the process of distortion is still continuing.

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They try to interpolate all parts of their scriptures which they think can be used by the Muslims in their favour. However, even today, there are passages found in the Torah and the Gospel which can only refer to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). For example:

> The LORD came from Mount Sinai and dawned upon them from Mount Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran and came with ten thousand holy ones and there was a fiery *sharī'ah* for them in his right hand. (Deuteronomy, 33:2)

Obviously, no one except Muḥammad (sws) can be alluded to by this prediction. It mentions the mount Paran and also ten thousand holy ones in explicit words. Here it should be kept in consideration that this prediction cited by the Qur'ān is with reference to the dominance of the Muslims, and it is an established fact that at the time of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (sws) had ten thousand Companions (rta) by his side.

It is only in the knowledge of God, the knower of the unknown, how many distortions have taken place in this prediction; however, a recent example of this distortion is that in some versions the words ten thousand have been replaced by ten lacs, the only objective of this being that Muslims may not be able to apply it to the conquest of Makkah. However, if this prediction is deeply deliberated upon, one will find in it a reference of all those things to which the Qur'ān has alluded.

The holy ones mentioned can only refer to people who are of noble character, pious, compassionate and diligent in worship. For this, the words used in the Qur'ān are: تَرٰىهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَّبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيْمَاهُمْ فِيْ وُجُوْهِهِمْ مِّنْ اَثَرِ السُّجُوْدِ. Now, two things can be possibly construed by mentioning the holy ones of the Torah by their traits. The first possibility is that the Qur'ān has made them fully distinct so that the People of the Book may recognize that the holy ones mentioned in their scriptures are the Companions of the Prophet (sws) and who by soon appearing in the number ten thousand will prove correct this prediction. The second possibility is that all these traits were also mentioned in the Torah but just as the Jews tried to conceal other predictions made in favour of the Prophet (sws), here too they obliterated the traits and left the words "holy ones" so that they are able to interpret it as per their own wishes. Both these possibilities exist; however, no judge can deny the fact that if this prediction of the Torah refers to anyone, it can only be Muḥammad (sws).

The second thing mentioned in this prediction of the Torah is "his right hand will have a fiery *sharī'ah* for them." In my opinion, this is actually a mention of what the Qur'anic words say: اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ. This has been explained in the following words by Jesus (sws): "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew, 3:12).

At another place, Jesus (sws) is reported to have said:

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The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone … Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. (Matthew, 21:42-44)

In the prediction of the Torah cited earlier from Deuteronomy, these words also occur:

Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand. At your feet they all bow down, and from you receive instruction. (Deuteronomy, 33:3)

If the underlined words are reflected upon, one can see that the translation has rendered them ambiguous; however, what is said is no different to what is mentioned by the Qur'ān in the words: فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانًا تَرٰىهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَّبْتَغُوْنَ.

After the parable of the Torah, the words: وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْاِنْجِيْلِ ۛ كَزَرْعٍ اَخْرَجَ شَطْئَهٗ فَاٰزَرَهٗ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوٰى عَلٰى سُوْقِهٖ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيْظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ refer to the parable mentioned in the Gospel. In the parable of the Torah, the devoutness in worship of the believers, their supremacy and their compassion and justice with other nations are portrayed. In the parable of the Gospel, their gradual rise is depicted: though they will have a very frail beginning, yet one day they will become such a strong and expansive tree that many great nations will seek refuge in its shade.

In the Gospel of Matthew, this parable is mentioned thus:

He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches. (Matthew, 13:31-32)

With slight variation, this parable also occurs in chapter 4 of the Gospel of Mark and chapter 8 of the Gospel of Luke. The Qur'ān has explained this parable by saying that Islam will pass through the same stages regarding its gradual rise to dominance as the stages of a sown crop. The seeds which are cultivated in a land initially put forth thin shoots; then these shoots receive support as a result of which these shoots become strong and sturdy and the plants stand on their stems. Similarly, a day will come when the seed of truth sown in Arabia will bear fruit and reach full bloom. The planter of this seed will be overjoyed to see it; however, this will cause heartburn and anger in those who tried to stop its development.

The particle لِ in لِيَغِيْظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ is to express the consequence and the word الْكُفَّارَ is highlighting the real meaning of the parable. Since believers are implied in the parable, here at the end by saying that their rise and ascent will be a cause of yearning

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and envy for the disbelievers, it is as if the entity for which the parable was stated has been referred to. It is very common in the Arabic language that at the end of a parable or a metaphor a word is used which points to the entity for which a parable or a metaphor is mentioned so that the real purport becomes evident. In the parable of the light mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr, a clear example of this is present.

The words وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّاَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا at the end bring glad tidings of the promise of divine help and support for whose substantiation the predictions of the Torah and the Gospel were mentioned: people who became exponents of the qualities stated and also remained firm in faith and deeds will be granted forgiveness and great reward by the Almighty. As for those who lay claim to faith but their sympathies are more with the enemies of Islam than God and His Prophet (sws) and who, at Ḥudaybiyah, showed the weakness mentioned earlier in the *sūrah*, if they do not mend their ways they will meet the fate destined for the opponents of Islam.

Raḥmānābād
1st November 1976 AD
8th Dhū al-Qa'dah 1396 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt (49)

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Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt

Tone of the *Sūrah* and its Relationship with the Previous one

This *sūrah* is an addendum and supplement to the preceding *sūrah*: Sūrah al-Fatḥ. The last verse of the previous *sūrah* mentions with reference to the Torah the following attribute of the Prophet (sws) and his companions (rta): مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗٓ اَشِدَّاۗءُ عَلَي الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاۗءُ بَيْنَهُمْ. (٢٩:٤٨) (Muhammad, the Messenger of God and those who are with him are stern to the disbelievers but merciful to one another, (48:29)). This whole *sūrah* is an explanation of this verse. The importance of this verse has already been elaborated upon in the exegesis of the previous *sūrah*. It was the importance of this verse which required that all of its implications and insinuations be elucidated here and which are essential for the reformation of the Muslim society. I have already explained this at a relevant place in this exegesis that these directives were revealed in the Qur'ān in accordance with the requirements of the circumstances so that people become aware of their importance. Thus this *sūrah* too was revealed in circumstances when certain things emanated from converts that showed that neither were they fully aware of the status and position of the Prophet (sws) nor of their responsibilities in an Islamic society. Thus important directives, which were necessary for the circumstances of those times, were revealed in this supplementary *sūrah*. All these directives relate to the mutual rights of the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims. The matter of the disbelievers is not discussed in it. The attitude which Muslims should adopt towards them has been alluded to in the previous *sūrahs*.

The nature of relationship of Sūrah al-Nūr with Sūrah al-Mu'minūn in the third group of *sūrahs* is the same as the relationship of this *sūrah* with that of Sūrah al-Fatḥ. Both *sūrahs* also have a similar tone.

Analysis of the Meanings

Verses (1-5): Muslims are warned that Muḥammad (sws) is a Messenger of God. Muslims are not allowed to give priority to their own views over the views and directives of the Prophet (sws). They must not raise their voice above his, nor must they address him as they address one another. The Almighty nurtures the seed of piety in only those hearts which have regard and respect for the Prophet (sws). Those who express their superiority while talking to him because they think that they have done God and the Prophet (sws) a favour by accepting Islam should be aware that this

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attitude might render in vain all their deeds while they may not even realize this loss.

Verses (6-10): The dealings of Muslims with one another should be based on brotherhood and fraternity and not on the basis of association with a particular party or group. It is totally forbidden for a Muslim faction to launch an assault over another Muslim faction by trusting the report of an evil doer, something on which they would themselves feel ashamed later on. In all important affairs, they should leave the decision-making to the Prophet (sws) and follow his directives. To obtain the support and sympathy of the Prophet (sws), no party should unduly pressurize him. This would be showing disregard to the blessing of faith the Almighty has bestowed on them . After tasting the flavour of faith, any deed unworthy of it would be tantamount to a return to disbelief and disobedience. The Almighty has endeared faith to them and made disbelief and wrongdoing abhorrent to them precisely to prevent this return. The *sūrah* further gives guidance to the believers when two of their parties take up arms against one another. They must not support either of these parties because of their association with it; instead they should view the whole affair with justice and fairness and try to make peace between them. If one of the parties refuses to submit to what has been ascertained as justice, then Muslims should forcibly make it submit to it.

Verses (11-13): Muslims are advised to refrain from all activities which create hatred among them and which ignite the flames of disorder and disruption in the society. No Muslim should mock or make fun of another Muslim or defame him or call him by insulting names. Muslims should avoid immoderate suspicion, and also refrain from hunting down each others' mistakes. Moreover, they must abstain from backbiting. Pride and vanity about one's clan, family or creed are relics of the period of *jāhiliyyah* before Islam and must not be continued. The Almighty has created all mankind from a single pair of man and woman: Adam and Eve. The real aim behind dividing mankind into various groups and tribes is merely to identify each separately. The basis of honour in the sight of God is piety and not association with a particular clan or tribe.

Verses (14-18): The concluding verses, in essence, reiterate what had been hinted at the beginning of the *sūrah*. It becomes clear from these verses that the people under discussion in the initial verses of the *sūrah* are the Bedouins who lived in the vicinity of Madīnah and who had accepted Islam only because they were over-awed by its increasing political strength. Therefore, the true essence of faith had not found its way into their hearts and they arrogantly reckoned that they had done the Prophet (sws) a great favour by accepting Islam. As a result, they had developed a conceited attitude and behaviour about which they have been warned in the beginning of the *sūrah*. Here, at the end, the Almighty has asked the Prophet (sws) to convey to these people that they must not think that Islam is indebted to them; the Almighty has full knowledge of their inner and outer selves. Though they have submitted, yet faith has not found its roots in their hearts. They have done Islam no favour by accepting faith; rather the Almighty has done them a favour by guiding them to faith. If they now fulfill the obligations which their faith now imposes on them, they shall be duly

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rewarded, for the Almighty is watching all their deeds.

Section I: Verses (1-10)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا تُقَدِّمُوۡا بَیۡنَ یَدَیِ اللّٰہِ وَ رَسُوۡلِہٖ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰہَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ سَمِیۡعٌ عَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۱﴾ یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا
تَرۡفَعُوۡۤا اَصۡوَاتَکُمۡ فَوۡقَ صَوۡتِ النَّبِیِّ وَ لَا تَجۡہَرُوۡا لَہٗ بِالۡقَوۡلِ کَجَہۡرِ بَعۡضِکُمۡ لِبَعۡضٍ اَنۡ تَحۡبَطَ اَعۡمَالُکُمۡ وَ اَنۡتُمۡ لَا تَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۲﴾
اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ یَغُضُّوۡنَ اَصۡوَاتَہُمۡ عِنۡدَ رَسُوۡلِ اللّٰہِ اُولٰٓئِکَ الَّذِیۡنَ امۡتَحَنَ اللّٰہُ قُلُوۡبَہُمۡ لِلتَّقۡوٰی ؕ لَہُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَۃٌ وَّ اَجۡرٌ عَظِیۡمٌ ﴿۳﴾
اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ یُنَادُوۡنَکَ مِنۡ وَّرَآءِ الۡحُجُرٰتِ اَکۡثَرُہُمۡ لَا یَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾ وَ لَوۡ اَنَّہُمۡ صَبَرُوۡا حَتّٰی تَخۡرُجَ اِلَیۡہِمۡ لَکَانَ خَیۡرًا لَّہُمۡ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ
غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ﴿۵﴾ یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِنۡ جَآءَکُمۡ فَاسِقٌۢ بِنَبَاٍ فَتَبَیَّنُوۡۤا اَنۡ تُصِیۡبُوۡا قَوۡمًۢا بِجَہَالَۃٍ فَتُصۡبِحُوۡا عَلٰی مَا فَعَلۡتُمۡ
نٰدِمِیۡنَ ﴿۶﴾ وَ اعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ فِیۡکُمۡ رَسُوۡلَ اللّٰہِ ؕ لَوۡ یُطِیۡعُکُمۡ فِیۡ کَثِیۡرٍ مِّنَ الۡاَمۡرِ لَعَنِتُّمۡ وَ لٰکِنَّ اللّٰہَ حَبَّبَ اِلَیۡکُمُ الۡاِیۡمَانَ وَ زَیَّنَہٗ
فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِکُمۡ وَ کَرَّہَ اِلَیۡکُمُ الۡکُفۡرَ وَ الۡفُسُوۡقَ وَ الۡعِصۡیَانَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِکَ ہُمُ الرّٰشِدُوۡنَ ﴿۷﴾ فَضۡلًا مِّنَ اللّٰہِ وَ نِعۡمَۃً ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ عَلِیۡمٌ حَکِیۡمٌ
﴿۸﴾ وَ اِنۡ طَآئِفَتٰنِ مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ اقۡتَتَلُوۡا فَاَصۡلِحُوۡا بَیۡنَہُمَا ۚ فَاِنۡۢ بَغَتۡ اِحۡدٰىہُمَا عَلَی الۡاُخۡرٰی فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِیۡ تَبۡغِیۡ حَتّٰی
تَفِیۡٓءَ اِلٰۤی اَمۡرِ اللّٰہِ ۚ فَاِنۡ فَآءَتۡ فَاَصۡلِحُوۡا بَیۡنَہُمَا بِالۡعَدۡلِ وَ اَقۡسِطُوۡا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ یُحِبُّ الۡمُقۡسِطِیۡنَ ﴿۹﴾ اِنَّمَا الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ اِخۡوَۃٌ
فَاَصۡلِحُوۡا بَیۡنَ اَخَوَیۡکُمۡ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰہَ لَعَلَّکُمۡ تُرۡحَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Believers! Do not give preference to your view over that of God and the Messenger. And have fear of God. Indeed, God hears all and knows all. (1)

Believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor call him the way you call one another lest your deeds should come to nothing without you even being aware of it. Remember that those who speak gently in the presence of God's Prophet are the men whose hearts God has selected to nurture piety. For them are forgiveness and a great reward. (2-3)

Indeed, most of those who call out to you while you are in your chambers are naive. If they waited with patience until you went out to them, it would have been better for them. And God is Forgiving and Merciful. (4-5)

Believers! If a defiant person brings you a piece of news, investigate it thoroughly lest you assail someone unknowingly then regret your action. And fully bear in mind that God's Messenger is among you. If he follows you in many matters, you would encounter many difficulties. But God has endeared faith to you and ingrained it in your hearts and made disbelief, defiance, and disobedience abhorrent to you. These

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are the people who are rightly guided through God's grace and bounty. And God is All-knowing and Wise. (6-8)

And if two groups from among the believers take up arms against one another, make peace between them. Then if one of them unjustly attacks the other, fight against the aggressor till it submits to God's judgement. So, if it submits, reconcile them with fairness and administer full justice. Indeed, God loves those who exercise justice. Muslims are brothers to one another so reconcile your brothers and fear God that you may be shown mercy. (9-10)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ۝[1]

Though common Muslims are addressed, yet the attitude of the Muslim Bedouins of the environs of Madīnah is discussed in this *sūrah*, as will gradually become evident from the later verses; they had accepted faith after having witnessed the emerging strength of Islam, and faith had not fully found its roots in their hearts. The first reason for this was that they had not embraced Islam after understanding it but because they were over-awed by it. Secondly, since they were cut off from the centre, they could not be properly educated and instructed. They were also afflicted with the conceited notion that since they had showed obedience to the Prophet (sws) without being attacked, they had done him a great favour. As a result of this notion when their leaders came to Madīnah their attitude towards the Prophet (sws) was as though they had a done a great favour and service to Islam. Even without being asked for advice, they would take the initiative to assertively give suggestions. To express their own superiority, they would raise their own voice above that of the Prophet (sws). Whenever they came, they would desire that the Prophet (sws), leaving aside all his activities, immediately attend to them and in case of any delay, they would shout unhesitatingly near his chamber to call him the way one calls an ordinary person. Each person would try to win the support of the Prophet (sws) in their various rifts and jealousies against each other prevailing ever since the days of *jāhiliyyah*. To achieve this end, they would at times try to give such information to the Prophet (sws) regarding their adversaries which would create a wrong perception about them in his mind. If, on the basis of this information, the Muslims of Madīnah had taken some step, it could have been very harmful to the collective life of the Muslims.

It is these circumstances in which this *sūrah* was revealed. Though the attitude of a specific group of Muslims is discussed in it, as was indicated earlier, the words of address of the Qur'ān are general so that this group is not put to too much disgrace and all doors are closed for Satan to ignite mischief and nuisance in the society.

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1. Believers! Do not given preference to your view over that of God and the Messenger. And Have fear of God. Indeed, God hears all and knows all.

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It needs to be kept in consideration that the prohibition stated here is to take the initiative before the Messenger of God in presenting one's view or to give preference to one's view to that of God and His Messenger; the prohibition does not relate to mere presentation of one's opinion to the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) would often ask for the opinions of the Companions (rta) in various affairs and they would also present them to him. Similarly, at times, the Companions (rta) would say to him that in case a certain measure of his was not based on divine revelation, then in their opinion, a certain other plan would be better. At times, the Prophet (sws) would even accept their opinion. This verse does not forbid such things. The Prophet (sws) through his very attitude encouraged this. It is mentioned in certain narratives that the Prophet (sws) was one who would seek consultation from people the most. The Almighty too, as is evident from: وَ شَاوِرۡهُمۡ فِی الۡاَمۡرِ (۱۵۹:۳) (and consult them in affairs, (3:159)), had directed the Prophet (sws) to keep consulting people.

The prohibition relates to what we have referred to earlier: a person while regarding the Messenger of God to be a common person or a mere leader and regarding his own self to be superior to him tries to influence the Messenger with his opinion which was not asked for in the first place and to give preference to it over that of the Messenger. If someone does this, then his attitude bears evidence to the fact that he is absolutely unaware of the real position and status of the Prophet (sws). A messenger of God is His representative and whatever he does or says is at the bidding of God. If a person is bold enough to give preference to his own views over his, then this, in other words, would mean that he regards his own view to be superior to that of God; this will lay waste all his beliefs and deeds without him even knowing it.

The words بَیۡنَ یَدَیِ اللّٰہِ وَ رَسُوۡلِہٖ show that the matters of God and His Messenger are not distinct from one another. A messenger of God is His representative and envoy. Giving him unasked for advice is like giving advice to God; giving preference to one's own opinion over his is like giving preference to one's own opinion over God's opinion and to regard oneself to be more wise is to regard one self to be wiser than the all-knowing God. These are the necessary consequences of this attitude of a person. It is possible that because of foolishness a person does not realize these consequences, but it cannot be refuted that these are the necessary consequences.

The words وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰہَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ سَمِیۡعٌ عَلِیۡمٌ sound a warning to these people that they should keep fearing God and not be in the craze of regarding themselves to be wiser and more sagacious than God and His Messenger. God is all-hearing and all-knowing; He is listening to what they are saying and is also fully aware of the motives behind them. What is implied is that when He sees and knows all, the law of retribution will definitely come into play. The succeeding verse mentions this law.

This verse warns the people of our times as well who, while claiming to serve Islam, are distorting its values and tampering with its laws. They are of the view that the form in which God and His Messenger has given Islam has gone obsolete and that

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it is essential that it be adapted to the needs of the current era. Thus they are changing the directives of the *sharī'ah* as per their own view. The only difference is that the verse mentions people who wanted to take the lead in presenting their suggestions to God and His Messenger, while the claimants to Islam of this era did not get this chance so they are now, God forbid, correcting the mistakes made by God and His Messenger regarding religion.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَرْفَعُوْٓا اَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوْا لَهٗ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ اَنْ تَحْبَطَ اَعْمَالُكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝[2]

This verse alludes to another aspect of what is said above: those who were inflicted with the satanic thought that they were in a position to give advice to God and His Messenger or those who vainly reckoned that they had done a great favour to Islam and the Prophet (sws) by embracing faith could not be humble and courteous in their conversation with the Prophet (sws). In fact, a reflection of this vanity in their conversation was quite natural. Thus when these people spoke to the Prophet (sws) it would become evident from their style that instead of learning from the Messenger of God they had actually come to teach him. Consequently, just as they would take the lead in presenting their views, they would also try that their voice be loud and imposing on the Prophet (sws) and when they would address him, then instead of respectfully addressing him by the words "O Messenger of God!", they would say "O Muḥammad!" as if they were conversing with some of their own common compatriots. Here, they are stopped from addressing the Prophet (sws) in such a disrespectful way because this attitude clearly showed that they had not yet recognized his true position and status; moreover, hidden in them was the pride of their own superiority which would ultimately lay waste their deeds.

I have been referring to the fact that the words to the effect كراهة or مخافة are suppressed before اَنْ تَحْبَطَ اَعْمَالُكُمْ. If this suppression is unfolded, the discourse would be something to the effect: you are being stopped from this disrespectful behaviour lest this lays waste all your deeds before God.

The implication of the words وَ اَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُوْنَ is that though these people conceitedly reckoned that they had done a great service to Islam and their anxiety to benefit the Prophet (sws) from their opinion was due to their zeal to serve religion, yet all the deeds which they reckoned to have done for the cause of religion would be of no use to them and they not even be aware of this.

It is evident from this that at times a person in his own view does a lot of things which he thinks are a service to religion, however, if he has the conceited notion that he is doing a favour to God or His messenger or His religion and as a result he neither

2. Believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor call him the way you call one another lest your deeds should come to nothing without you even being aware of it.

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pays true regard to the exaltedness of God nor show the true respect His Messenger deserves, then all his deeds will come to nothing and he will only come out of this unawareness in the Hereafter. God is not dependent on anyone for the service of His religion so that a person thinks himself to have done a favour to Him and His Messenger. Only the deeds of those people will be blessed enough to be accepted by Him who serve the cause of His religion only to please Him in accordance with the bounds and limits set by Him; at the same time, they acknowledge wholeheartedly that by doing this service they do not do any favour to God or His Messenger; on the contrary, God has done them a favour as He gave them the urge to be of some service to His religion.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَغُضُّوْنَ اَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ امْتَحَنَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوٰى ؕ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ۝[3]

This verse teaches the right etiquette essential for every believer to adopt regarding the Prophet (sws). The verse says that those who keep down their voices before the Prophet (sws) are the ones whose hearts the Almighty has selected to nurture the seeds of piety. The word امْتَحَنَ encompasses the meaning of the word اِصْطَفٰى or some word of similar meaning. It is evident from this that not every heart is appropriate for sowing and nurturing the seeds of piety; the Almighty selects such hearts by making them pass through a test. The real thing which becomes a reason for preference in this is whether a person has the true zeal to submit before God and His messenger and has the awareness to be humble before them. The more a person has this the more he is blessed with piety and the more a person is devoid of it the farther away is he from piety. Raising one's voce is mentioned here as a reflection of a person's inner self, as has been indicated earlier. A person who tries to raise his voice over that of another shows by this very act of his that he regards himself to be superior to him. This attitude closes doors to gain and to acquiring more. Anyone who adopts this attitude with the Messenger of God will not only be deprived of the blessings and benefits of the Messenger but also of the urge from God because the Messenger is God's Messenger.

The same status is occupied by God's Book and the Sunnah of the Messenger. Only those hearts are selected by God for nurturing piety which are humble and submit themselves before the Book and Sunnah the way Muslims have been directed to be humble in the presence of God's Messenger. A person who has the sincere zeal of submitting himself to every directive of God and His Messenger will find before him many opportunities to grow in his piety as well as divine help at every step. If a person conceitedly reckons that he is in a position to reform the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, then this vanity of his will lay waste his deeds and lead him to a grievous fate

3. Remember that those who speak gently in the presence of God's Prophet are the men whose hearts God has selected to nurture piety. For them are forgiveness and a great reward.

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in the Hereafter.

Consider now the next part of the verse: لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّاَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ. In the earlier verse, it was stated that people who raised their voice above that of the Prophet's voice would find their deeds going waste. Now, here, in contrast, the fate of people who keep down their voices before that of the Prophet (sws) is mentioned: for them is forgiveness and great reward. In other words, God will forgive their faults because they remained humble before God and His Messenger. Their vanity and haughtiness did not make them bold enough to regard themselves to be superior to God and His Messenger. The reward they got for this attitude was that God chose their hearts to nurture the seed of piety in them – something of which the reward in turn is great in the eyes of God.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُنَادُوْنَكَ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ الْحُجُرٰتِ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ۝[4]

Just as these people were disrespectful to the Prophet (sws) in his gatherings, they were also discourteous in shouting to him from outside his chambers to call him to gatherings where he had not come. Such behaviour is disrespectful in itself; however, its inner motive was even more ignominious than its outer expression. These people, as I have alluded to earlier with more details forthcoming, thought wrongly, that since they had embraced Islam without any war or armed struggle they had done a great favour to Islam and the Prophet (sws). For this reason, they thought that it was their right that when they came to the Prophet (sws), he should greet them without any delay. If he was not present at that moment, they would not wait for him and start encircling the chambers of the wives of the Prophet (sws) and call out his name in a very disrespectful manner. The verse says that most of them have no sense. The words اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ harbour in them a rebuke on their foolishness and also very subtly hint to the Prophet (sws) to overlook this foolishness of theirs: even though they are guilty of doing something very ill-mannered yet their majority is neither aware of the status of the Prophet (sws) nor of the fate of this behaviour; so they need instruction and training and should be ignored.

The word وَرَآءِ (behind) in the expression مِنْ وَّرَآءِ الْحُجُرٰتِ does not necessarily say that they used to call out from behind the chambers and this was the reason for the rebuke. This word does not specifically mean "behind." In the Arabic language, the expression نَادَانِي مِنْ وَرَآ الدَّار would only mean "he called out to me from outside the house" regardless of whether from the back of the house or from the front. What made this act objectionable was the way in which they addressed the Prophet (sws). It needs to be kept in mind that it is against respect to call even a common person in this manner; let alone the Prophet (sws). The proper way of addressing people to meet them has already been delineated in Sūrah al-Nūr.

4. Indeed, most of those who call out to you while you are in your chambers are naive.

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وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوْا حَتّٰى تَخْرُجَ اِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۵﴾[5]

This verse informs them of the correct etiquette they should have adopted: had they been patient enough to wait for him to come out, this would have earned them great blessings. The style of the verse is to express sorrow at their deprivation. The implication is that had they recognized and valued the fountain they had reached, their thirst would have been quenched; it is their loss that because of not duly honouring this opportunity they lost what they had, much less gain something from it.

By the words وَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ the Almighty has reminded the Prophet (sws) of His attributes of forgiveness and mercy and the purpose is to subtly direct his attention to the fact that even though those people were guilty of such unworthy acts, they were people bereft of sense and reason; so, for that time, he should ignore those acts. God was forgiving and merciful and it was but appropriate that His Prophet too should be forgiving and merciful.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنْ جَآءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌۢ بِنَبَاٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوْۤا اَنْ تُصِيْبُوْا قَوْمًۢا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوْا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿۶﴾[6]

This verse informs the Muslims of Madīnah of a certain political threat: I have referred to earlier that the behaviour of the leaders of certain Bedouin tribes of the environs of Madīnah is discussed here. Just as those people were bereft of the awareness of the high stature of the Prophet (sws), they were also until then bereft of the sentiments of Islamic brotherhood. The effects of the jealousy and hate they harboured for one another in the days of ignorance were still found in them. When they came to Madīnah, some of them would give all kinds of right and wrong news about their adversaries in order to influence the Prophet's opinion about them. They would also try to win the support of the Companions (rta) they could influence in this matter so that they were able to use the central power of Madīnah in their favour. This was a very precarious situation. The government of Madīnah in the first place was not yet fully stable. Secondly, any action on the basis of the baseless rumours, especially against some Muslim faction would have been against both justice and collective welfare. This situation necessitated that the centre of the Muslims be directed that in all such important affairs they altogether leave the decision to the discretion of the Prophet (sws); they should also not trust the reports of unreliable people thereby influencing the opinion of the Prophet (sws) in accordance with their own. Consequently, they were directed that if an insolent person brought news of some important event, then without thoroughly investigating the matter they were not to take any step relying on that news lest being over-awed with zeal they end up attacking an innocent faction and then later

5. If they waited with patience until you went out to them, it would have been better for them. And God is Forgiving and Merciful.

6. Believers! If a defiant person brings you a piece of news, investigate it thoroughly lest you assail someone unknowingly then regretting your action.

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regretting it.

The word فَاسِقٌ (insolent) here refers to people who are indifferent to the bounds and limits of the *sharī'ah*. I have already presented my research on the word نَبَأ at a relevant place in this exegesis that it refers to important news accepting which or acting on which may have far reaching consequences. If such important news is given by someone who is not reliable as regards his faith and morals, then both sense and morality entail that this piece of information not be believed until both the information and the person giving it are thoroughly investigated. It may be that such a person gave the information because of evil motives and the information may either be totally baseless or because of some ill-intention has been changed and adapted to inflame the emotions of the listeners. The word جَهَالة is used in the meaning of emotional frenzy and rage. I have presented research on this word as well at a relevant place in this exegesis.

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَوْ يُطِيْعُكُمْ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ لَعَنِتُّمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَبَّبَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْاِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهٗ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَ كَرَّهَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوْقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الرّٰشِدُوْنَ ۙ﴿۷﴾ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَنِعْمَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۸﴾ [7]

These verses further emphasize the warning meted out earlier to the Muslims: the Messenger of God was present among them; hence they were not to give so much importance to their opinions that they try to convince him into following them; on the contrary, they were to follow him. Whatever steps he took, he took in the guidance of God. Hence their success both in this world and in the next was in following him and not in following their own feelings and emotions. If they wanted to present their opinion, they were to respectfully do so and leave the decision to his discretion and not desire that all their opinions be necessarily accepted. They were to fully bear in mind that a lot of their opinions were raw; if the Messenger of God accepted those opinions, they would end up in a lot of bother; he only accepted the correct opinions they put forth. Because of the Messenger of God they were lucky enough to be divinely guided at every step; hence they should duly value this favour and show gratitude to God.

The word عَنِت means "difficulty and hardship." Thus لَعَنِتُّمْ would mean "you will get caught in great difficulty and hardship." If a patient instead of following the doctor wants that the doctor follow his opinion, then it is very obvious that such a patient will end up in a lot of danger.

The words وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَبَّبَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْاِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهٗ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوْقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ say that

7. Fully bear in mind that God's Messenger is among you. If he follows you in many matters, you would encounter many difficulties. But God has endeared faith to you and ingrained it in your hearts and made disbelief, defiance, and disobedience abhorrent to you. These are the people who are rightly guided through God's grace and bounty. And God is all-Knowing and Wise.

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precisely to save them from difficulty and hardship had the Almighty endeared faith to them and made it find roots in their hearts and had made disbelief and disobedience hateful and odious to them. The obligation they owe to this arrangement is that they should continue to love and hold dear their faith and none of their words and deeds be stained with disbelief and disobedience.

The preposition اِلَی after حَبَّبَ and کَرَّہَ refers to the special arrangement made by the Almighty through His Messenger to endear faith to them and to engender in them an abhorrence of disbelief and defiance. In the age of *jāhiliyyah*, all moral values had been muddled. Satan had made faith hateful and endeared disbelief and disobedience to people. Faith was so deeply concealed beneath multi-layers that to unveil its true beauty and radiance to people by slicing away these layers had become an onerous task. Similarly, Satan had made disbelief so deceptively beautiful by various lures that to show its real horrendous face had become virtually impossible. It was a blessing of God that He sent His Messenger who after a long struggle and *jihād* unveiled faith in its true attractive form and made its majesty take root in their hearts. Similarly, he scraped away the artificial embellishments from the horrible face of disbelief and showed them its real hideous and abhorrent face and made them detest it. This topic is discussed here by the words حَبَّبَ اِلَی and کَرَّہَ اِلَی. In other words, he presented belief and disbelief in their original form to them as a result of which they became desirous of belief and hated disbelief. It is as if both these verbs comprise the meaning of اِلَی and the preposition is pointing towards this meaning.

Here the object of the verb حَبَّبَ is faith alone while there are three objects of the verb کَرَّہَ: کُفْر (disbelief) and فُسُوْق (defiance) and عِصْیَان (disobedience) The reason for this, as is indicated earlier, is that the people whose character is under discussion here were the ones who had till then not yet become fully aware of the opposite of disbelief. As a result, it required that they be told that it is not merely کُفْر (disbelief) which was contrary to belief; things belonging to the category of فُسُوْق (defiance) and عِصْیَان (disobedience) were also off shoots of disbelief and for this reason the Almighty regarded them to be detestable as well.

Though the word فِسْق has been used in the Qur'ān to connote کُفْر, yet since here it is used with کُفْر, it would refer to defiance shown to God by a person while laying claim to belief. The word عِصْیَان as per its context and occasion refers to disobeying the Messenger. Since disobeying His representatives is also an act of indirect disobedience to Him, hence this thing is also included in its meaning.

The words اُولٰٓئِکَ ھُمُ الرّٰشِدُوْنَ. فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰہِ وَنِعْمَۃً ؕ وَاللّٰہُ عَلِیْمٌ حَکِیْمٌ state that it is these people in whose hearts the majesty of faith has taken roots and who abhor the slightest trace of کُفْر (disbelief) and فُسُوْق (defiance) and عِصْیَان (disobedience). They are, in reality, rightly guided and they received this guidance as a favour and blessing of God. Thus, they should remain thankful to God alone. Like the naïve, they should not think that these favours are the result of their own endeavours and that they have done a favour

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to God and His Messenger. The attributes are meant to emphasize that every act of God is based on His knowledge and wisdom. He does not blindly apportion things. He blesses only those with the gift of faith whom He finds worthy of it.

This verse showers praise on the Muslims of Madīnah who were continuously benefiting from the companionship of the Prophet (sws) and were fully devoted to God. Moreover, the context bears witness that the verse is a slant on the raw Muslims whose shortcomings are being discussed since the initial verses of the *sūrah* and who belonged to the nearby tribes of Madīnah.

Our exegetes[8] as per their customary practice have also mentioned an occasion of revelation related to verse 6: the Prophet (sws) sent Walīd ibn 'Uqbah to collect *zakāh* from the tribe of Banū Muṣṭaliq; when he reached there, the tribesmen came out in the form of a procession to greet him; Walīd thought that the people had come out to fight him; fearing an attack, he ran back home and informed the Prophet (sws) that those people had become apostates and had refused to pay *zakāh*;[9] on hearing this news, the Prophet (sws) was very annoyed at the tribe of Banū Muṣṭaliq; he sent an army contingent or decided to send one; when the Banū Muṣṭaliq tribe got news of this their leader immediately came over to the Prophet (sws) and assured him on oath that they had not even seen the face of Walīd much less refused to pay *zakāh*. After this explanation, the matter was resolved. In the opinion of our exegetes, this verse was revealed because of this narrative attributed to Walīd; Muslims were directed not take a hasty step believing in the narration of a *fāsiq* person.

It is customary for our exegetes to cite an occasion of revelation for almost every verse. They have also cited an occasion of revelation for verse 4 earlier. I have not dealt with it because some authorities have criticized it; however, as far as the occasion of revelation of the verse under discussion is concerned, there is a consensus of the exegetes on it. Thus, analyzing it was essential.

The principle premise regarding narratives on the occasion of revelation that should always remain in consideration is something which I have mentioned in the preface to this exegesis: if our early authorities mention an incident as an occasion of revelation for a verse, it does not necessarily mean that that exact incident was the cause of revelation of that verse; they mean that this verse also guides us regarding that incident. This is the opinion of the scholars of exegetical interpretation, which is why I have cited it. Moreover, it is also known that most narratives which mention an occasion of revelation are *ḍa'īf*, in fact, baseless. Hence it is essential that they be analyzed in the light of criteria based on both reason and revelation lest this lead to an untoward situation which this verse had stopped Muslims from ending up in.

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8. See for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 210-211.

9. Some narrators have reported that he did not run away because of fear but because he already had grievances with the tribe. So he came back without meeting them and instead reported to the Prophet (sws) that they had refused to pay *zakāh.* See: Ibid.

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If this occasion of revelation is analyzed in the light of reason, one will see that it has many flaws.

Firstly, the verse has asked Muslims not to trust a piece of news given by a *fāsiq* (defiant person). Before this incident there is nothing known to people from Walīd which could, God forbid, regard him as a *fāsiq*. Not only this, such was the nature of his reliability and trustworthiness that the Prophet (sws) entrusted him with the responsibility of collecting *zakāh*. If there had been some issue with his character, the Prophet (sws) would never have selected him for such an important service.

Secondly, if this occasion of revelation is accepted, then it will have to be conceded that the Prophet (sws), God forbid, was so unaware of his Companions (rta) that he would select from among them for such important positions those, who because of their dishonest misconduct, would endanger both the citizens and the government. Such short-sightedness is not expected even from a common sane human being, let alone the Prophet (sws).

Thirdly, if Walīd ran away from the tribe thinking the group who had come out to receive him to be armed in order to attack him and if he conveyed this impression of his to the Prophet (sws), then though this could be regarded as a naïve act on his part, as per the *sharī'ah*, it cannot be regarded as *fisq*. Had this been the case, the verse should have been something to the effect: "Believers! Do not entrust your responsible positions to simpletons who are not even able to distinguish between a welcoming faction and a warring faction." What needs to be kept in consideration is that had Walīd been such a simpleton, would the Prophet (sws) have entrusted him with such a political and fiscal position? Can the trait of being a simpleton suddenly emanate from a person and the people around him not know about it? Even a person like the Prophet (sws) was not able to discern it?

Fourthly, it is Walīd who was made the governor of Kūfah by the caliph 'Uthmān (rta) in his time. Was he not aware of the fact that as per a Qur'ānic verse, this person had been classified as a *fāsiq* and was not even eligible to narrate a report or to bear witness, let alone governorship? If he was not aware, then it should be accepted that a rightly guided caliph as 'Uthmān (rta) who is also known as the collector of the Qur'ān, God forbid, did not have even as much knowledge of the Qur'ān as the narrators of reports of occasions of revelation.

I have referred to only a few aspects of this occasion of revelation; otherwise it has problems at every step. Some variants say that the Prophet (sws) had sent the army contingent;[10] others say that he had decided to send it and had given an ultimatum to the Banū Muṣtaliq that if they did not abstain, he would send someone who is like him (عندی کنفسی) and at the same time patting 'Alī (rta) on his back to encourage him indicated that he would be sent for this campaign.[11] In some other narratives, it is said

10. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 210.

11. See, for example: Al-Zamakhasharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, 362.

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that he had sent Khālid ibn Walīd (rta) for the campaign.[12] In short, contradictions abound even though it is evident from the words لَوْ يُطِيْعُكُمْ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ that if such a thing came to the Prophet (sws), he ignored it and people were warned that they should not try to influence him with their opinions.

In my opinion, this occasion of revelation has been concocted by the *rawāfiḍ* through which they not only wanted to bring Walīd's name into disrepute but also that of 'Uthman (rta) that deliberately patronizing his relative[13] he appointed a *fāsiq* as governor of Kūfah. Even during his tenure as governor of Kūfah, those horrible people did not spare Walīd and narrated such incidents reflecting his *fisq* which bring both laughter and tears: laughter at their intelligence and tears at the simplicity of our exegetes who cite such baseless reports in their exegesis even though they have no relation with the words and context of the verse.

وَ اِنْ طَآىِٕفَتٰنِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اقْتَتَلُوْا فَاَصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ فَاِنْۢ بَغَتْ اِحْدٰىهُمَا عَلَى الْاُخْرٰى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِيْ تَبْغِيْ حَتّٰى تَفِيْٓءَ اِلٰٓى اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنْ فَآءَتْ فَاَصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَ اَقْسِطُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ ۝[14]

It was said in the previous verse that it was not allowed for Muslims to attack any faction of Muslims by relying on the report of a *fāsiq*. In this verse, Muslims or their governments are guided on what to do when two factions of Muslims are at war: they should try to resolve the issue. If either of the two is not ready for a reconciliation or after reconciliation commits an excess against the other by violating the terms of the reconciliation, then in this situation other Muslims or their government should wage war against the perpetrators of excess until they submit to the truth.

The words حَتّٰى تَفِيْٓءَ اِلٰٓى اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ mean to submit to the decision of the adjudicator. If a faction evades this decision, it is as if it evades submission to the decision of God. This is because in order to resolve this situation this is what the Almighty has ordered and when God had commanded thus, then its status is that of God's decision.

The words فَاِنْ فَآءَتْ فَاَصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَ اَقْسِطُوْا refer to the fact that if after this collective action by the Muslims they submit, then no further action should be taken against them on the grounds that they had adopted a rebellious attitude; on the contrary, peace should be made between the two parties on the basis of justice, and the party which has been inflicted with damage should be compensated.

The word اَقْسِطُوْا has come to fulfil the consequences of justice. The implication is

12. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 211.

13. It should remain in mind that Walīd ibn 'Uqbah (rta) was a relative of 'Uthmān (rta).

14. And if two groups from among the believers take up arms against one another, make peace between them. Then if one of them unjustly attacks the other, fight against the aggressors till it submits to God's judgement. So if it submits, reconcile them with fairness and administer full justice.

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that neither should unfair concession be granted to anyone nor should anyone be oppressed: whatever is the need of justice should be implemented fairly and squarely. It is such just people whom the Almighty keeps as friends.

The following collective principles can be derived from this verse:

1. If two groups of Muslims are engaged in a fight with one another, other Muslims should not remain indifferent to this state of affairs and should not think that this matter does not concern them. Similarly, it is improper to support a group merely on the basis of familial or tribal bias without finding out which of the two is right. They must support the group which in their opinion is right, and, in no way, let biases form the basis of their support or otherwise. They must try to fully comprehend the situation, and, then, try to reconcile the two groups.

2. If one of the groups is not willing to reconcile, or, insists on war or after reconciliation presents conditions which are against justice, then, in this situation, it would be the duty of the Muslims to use force to make it submit to these conditions.

3. In such disputes, obeying the conditions of reconciliation presented in accordance with the directives of God and His Prophet (sws) by neutral Muslims will be mandatory on the two factions the way it is mandatory to obey the directives of the *sharī'ah*. So much so, war will be declared on the faction which deviates from them.

4. If after reconciliation a faction violates the conditions of reconciliation, then it shall be regarded as a transgressor. It is obligatory on the Muslims to curb it from this act.

It should be kept in consideration that this directive relates to a situation when there is a central power of the Muslims which has the authority to intervene between two such factions or groups. In this age, the complex situation has arisen that many small and large Muslim states have been set up. If a war is, God forbid, waged between them, then it is not allowed for other Muslims states to ignore this situation. Every one of them should make efforts to make the warring states reconcile as is directed in this verse; however, practical intervention depends on the situation which relates to the political needs of the time. If the situation allows, use of force against the transgressing faction to make it submit to the truth will be totally justified. But if this is liable to cause further complexities in the international situation, then practical intervention should be abstained from; however, there can be no abstention from the efforts to make the two reconcile through diplomatic means.

اِنَّمَا الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ اِخۡوَةٌ فَاَصۡلِحُوۡا بَيۡنَ اَخَوَيۡكُمۡ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُرۡحَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾[15]

All Muslims are brothers to one another. A dispute between them is, in the very first place, against their brotherhood; however, if Satan is able to instigate a dispute, then

15. Indeed, God loves those who exercise justice. Muslims are brothers to one another so reconcile your brothers and fear God that you may be shown mercy.

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other Muslims should try to make peace between them and not further ignite this enmity. The words وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ say that Muslims should keep fearing God. If they become a means of death and destruction for their brethren or if they are involved in a brawl on the basis of some national, tribal, geographical or political expediency, then they should remember that they will not be able to save themselves from the grasp of God. Only the people who always try to strengthen the brotherhood established by God will be regarded worthy of His mercy; those who neither do anything to weaken it nor, as far as they can, give an opportunity to anyone else to do so.

The dual used in بَيْنَ اَخَوَيْكُمْ does not imply that the war is only between brothers; in fact, this is used for two factions of Muslims. Such usage of the dual is common in Arabic; examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

The Source of *Jarḥ* and *Ta'dīl* in the Qur'ān

Our scholars of Ḥadīth regard verse 6 of Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ جَآءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌۢ... to be the source for verifying the reliability or unreliability of the narrators of Ḥadīth as a result of which the great science of *rijāl* was born – which is one of the sciences of which Muslims are the pioneers.

This verse directs Muslims to fully investigate news given to them by a *fasīq*. This directive is indeed a general one for it is essential to investigate all news likely to have far-fetched consequences. However, if someone attributes a report to the Prophet (sws), then it is even more important that it be scrutinized. The Prophet (sws) is a divinely appointed guide: each of his directives and practices is the best exemplar for the Muslims. If something is wrongly ascribed to him and it is accepted without inquiry, then this can result in loss not only in this world but in the Hereafter as well.

Though the verse only asks Muslims to investigate the news given by a *fāsiq*, yet it is obvious that if a narrator is *majhūl* (not known) such that neither is he known to be trustworthy nor untrustworthy, then it is essential that he too be researched into. This is because there is a chance that in accepting the report of an unknown narrator that person turns out in reality to be a *fāsiq*. Thus scholars of Ḥadīth have always investigated *majhūl* narrators so that their reliability or unreliability can be ascertained. If they were not able to find out the details of a narrator, they rejected him by regarding him to be *majhūl*.

It is also evident from the verse that this investigation is essential when a *fāsiq* gives a piece of news that has far reaching consequences. This is because the word used is نَبَأً which is used for a piece of news that is important and has far reaching consequences. This word is not used for a common piece of news or incident. Thus in general matters of every day life there is nothing wrong in accepting the information of a *fāsiq*.

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The verse asks Muslims to investigate both the narrator and his narration since the words used are: "Believers! When a *fāsiq* brings a piece of news to you, investigate it." It is obvious that the object of the verb فَتَبَيَّنُوْٓا is both the narrator and his narration; in fact, that the narration is the object of the verb is even more evident. This is because it is already known that the narrator is *fāsiq.* In the investigation of a report, just as the reliability and trustworthiness of a narrator is important, even more important is to critically evaluate the words of the report, its context and background, its accordance or discordance with other reports, its analysis in the light of reason and revelation and, most important of all, its harmony with the Book of God and related things. If only the narrator is scrutinized and all these aspects are disregarded, then it cannot be said that research has been thoroughly done. Our scholars of Ḥadīth mostly stress on scrutinizing the narrator and do not give much importance to scrutinizing the content of the report with regard to the aspects I have just referred to. This is in spite of the fact that without researching into these aspects we cannot say that the investigation is thorough. It is for this reason that our jurists have enunciated principles to scrutinize the contents of a report and this process is called *darāyah*. The greatest share in this service is that of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (ra). By contributing in this regard, he has not only done a great favour to *fiqh*, he has also done a great service to the discipline of Ḥadīth. Had our scholars of Ḥadīth properly applied these principles, the great propaganda and uproar against Ḥadīth would never have originated by mischief-mongers which opened the way to many interventions in religion by many misled sects. If God gives me the urge and time to write my proposed book on the principles of deliberation on Ḥadīth, I will *inshā'Allāh* try to elaborate upon the value and importance of these principles.

It is evident from the above details that it is in accordance with this explicit directive of the Qur'ān that our scholars of Ḥadīth have exposed *fāsiq* and *majhūl* narrators. However, in these times, some well-wishers of such narrators have asserted that exposing the faults of these narrators amounts to backbiting which the Qur'ān has prohibited in verse 12 of this very *sūrah* and regarded it to be equivalent to consuming the meat of one's dead brother. In their opinion, because of a certain "strategy," the scholars of Ḥadīth legalized this prohibition in order to save religion from the narratives of *fāsiq* narrators. From this point, they postulated an even deeper and subtle point that none of the prohibitions of the *sharī'ah* is eternal. Hence, the leader of an Islamic Movement (*Taḥrīk-i Islāmī*) has the right under the requisites of this "strategy" to legalize a prohibition. I have already humbly commented on these views in some of my articles;[16] there is neither need nor requirement to repeat this critique here. It suffices to say that would the scholars of Ḥadīth legalize a thing as filthy as

16. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, Khalid Masud (ed.) *Maqalāt-i Iṣlāḥī*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1991), 79-189.

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backbiting as part of this so called "strategy" when the Qur'ān has so explicitly directed to expose the *fāsiq* and *majhūl* narrators.

It also needs to be kept in consideration that regarding the impugning of narrators to be backbiting is the work of the exponents of *taṣawwuf*. Since the whole edifice of *taṣawwuf* stands on weak and baseless narratives, when the scholars of Ḥadīth began researching into the narrators of a report, these people thought that if this work continued fearlessly the whole edifice of *taṣawwuf* would be razed to ground. In order to safeguard themselves from this danger, the exponents of *taṣawwuf* started to allege that the scholars of Ḥadīth were indulging in backbiting. This point became very popular among the circles of *taṣawwuf*. This point was adopted by some minds of the present age who dubbed it as "strategy", and, on this basis, enunciated such a principle which could disfigure the whole religion.

In the end, another thing about this verse should be kept in mind. Some scholars of Ḥadīth and *fiqh,* while investigating the narratives of a *fāsiq* person, gave importance to the practical *fisq* which emanated from him while disregarding the *fisq* of his belief and ideology. It is their opinion that if a person is guilty of some practical *fisq* like telling a lie or has a bad moral conduct, then his narrative and testimony shall no doubt not be accepted; however, if he has belief which can be regarded as *fisq*, then merely on this basis his narrative or testimony shall not be rejected. In my opinion, this view is absolutely wrong. Experience shows that the number of narratives fabricated by people having beliefs which reflect *fisq* are much more than those fabricated by people whose deeds reflect *fisq*. Their narratives are found in great numbers in books of *sīrah*, *tafsīr*, *taṣawwuf* and history and have been misused by innovators and misguided sects. May God have mercy on the scholars who have given this concession to narrators having *fisq* in their beliefs and in this manner set this *ummah* on a trial which is not at all easy for the upright.

In my opinion, this division between *fisq* in belief and *fisq* in practice is meaningless. There is nothing in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth which supports this view. The general principle stated earlier regarding *fāsiq* people is in accordance with reason and revelation if it is applied to the people who have *fisq* in their beliefs: their report and testimony shall be accepted in all matters in which the report of a disbeliever is acceptable; however in important matters, in particular religious ones, their report and testimony cannot possibly be accepted.

Section II: Verses (11-13)

In verse seven earlier, the Almighty has mentioned the elaborate arrangement He had made to save Muslims out of His grace from كُفْر (disbelief) and فُسُوْق (defiance) and عِصْيَان (disobedience). In the succeeding verses, they are stopped from certain things which are contrary to faith and are of the category of *fisq*. They incite mischief in the hearts which

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poisons the whole society and which if not stopped, causes those who have been called رُحَمَآءُ بَيۡنَهُمۡ by God to become the enemies of one another.

Readers may proceed to study the succeeding verses.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا يَسۡخَرۡ قَوۡمٌ مِّنۡ قَوۡمٍ عَسٰۤى اَنۡ يَّكُوۡنُوۡا خَيۡرًا مِّنۡهُمۡ وَلَا نِسَآءٌ مِّنۡ نِّسَآءٍ عَسٰۤى اَنۡ يَّكُنَّ خَيۡرًا مِّنۡهُنَّ ۚ وَلَا تَلۡمِزُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوۡا بِالۡاَلۡقَابِ ؕ بِئۡسَ الِاسۡمُ الۡفُسُوۡقُ بَعۡدَ الۡاِيۡمَانِ ۚ وَمَنۡ لَّمۡ يَتُبۡ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا اجۡتَنِبُوۡا كَثِيۡرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ ۫ اِنَّ بَعۡضَ الظَّنِّ اِثۡمٌ وَّلَا تَجَسَّسُوۡا وَلَا يَغۡتَبۡ بَّعۡضُكُمۡ بَعۡضًا ؕ اَيُحِبُّ اَحَدُكُمۡ اَنۡ يَّاۡكُلَ لَحۡمَ اَخِيۡهِ مَيۡتًا فَكَرِهۡتُمُوۡهُ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۲﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّا خَلَقۡنٰكُمۡ مِّنۡ ذَكَرٍ وَّاُنۡثٰى وَجَعَلۡنٰكُمۡ شُعُوۡبًا وَّقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوۡا ؕ اِنَّ اَكۡرَمَكُمۡ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ اَتۡقٰكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيۡمٌ خَبِيۡرٌ ﴿۱۳﴾

Believers! Let not one group of men make fun of another; it is possible that they may fare better than them. And let not women make fun of other women who may perhaps turn out to be better than themselves. And do not defame one another, nor call one another by bad names. Even the name of defiance is bad after faith. And those who do not repent are the ones who are unjust to their souls. (11)

Believers! Avoid being overly speculative, for some speculations are a blatant sin and do not pry on one another. And no one among you should indulge in backbiting others. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? So you regarded this to be abhorrent. And keep fearing God. Indeed, God is ever inclined to accepting repentance and is Ever-Merciful. (12)

People! We have created you from one man and one woman and divided you into tribes and clans that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in God's sight is he who is the most God-conscious. Indeed, God is All-knowing and Wise. (13)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا يَسۡخَرۡ قَوۡمٌ مِّنۡ قَوۡمٍ عَسٰۤى اَنۡ يَّكُوۡنُوۡا خَيۡرًا مِّنۡهُمۡ وَلَا نِسَآءٌ مِّنۡ نِّسَآءٍ عَسٰۤى اَنۡ يَّكُنَّ خَيۡرًا مِّنۡهُنَّ ۚ وَلَا تَلۡمِزُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوۡا بِالۡاَلۡقَابِ ؕ بِئۡسَ الِاسۡمُ الۡفُسُوۡقُ بَعۡدَ الۡاِيۡمَانِ ۚ وَمَنۡ لَّمۡ يَتُبۡ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾[17]

The words يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا are not merely meant for address; further down the evils which are *fisq* and also contrary to faith are mentioned. This address directs the attention of the Muslims to the fact that it is not befitting for those who have

17. Believers! Let not one group of men make fun of another; it is possible that they may fare better than them. And let not women make fun of other women who may perhaps turn out to be better than themselves. And do not defame one another, nor call one another by bad names. Even the name of defiance is bad after faith. And those who do not repent are the ones who are unjust to their souls.

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embraced faith to stain themselves with *fisq*.

It is neither befitting for men once they have accepted faith to make fun of other men by regarding them to be inferior to them nor is it permitted that women should ridicule other women. In the sight of God, it is faith and deeds which make a person noble or ignoble and true weight carried by faith and deeds will be known on the Day of Judgement through God's scale of justice. It is possible that a person regards himself to be superior but on the Day of Judgement the scale of God tells us that his faith and deeds carry no weight. It is similarly possible that he who was never given any importance by the people of the world is given a status in the kingdom of God which is way above given to those who regarded him to be lowly.

In the verse, women are emphatically mentioned with men even though apparently there was no need for it. The general words لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ were enough for them as well. However, in the mention of both morality and immorality, the Almighty has specially mentioned women where they are emphatically urged to strive to gain high reward or to save them from some trial. Here it is this second case. The evil from which men are stopped here is found if not more in women then certainly not less than in men. Women who are conceited because they regard their family, lineage, financial situation or apparent looks to be superior, speak in very humiliating tones to women whom they regard inferior to themselves.

The things which have been forbidden here have a special inner aspect, and the purpose, in fact, is to uproot it. The verse which is coming up at the end of this section points to this inner aspect. Among the various evils invented by Satan to mislead man is the trial of superiority of one's race, creed, family and tribe. Those who are inflicted with this evil (and few are the fortunate who are able to safeguard themselves from it) obviously regard others to be inferior to themselves and when they do so, their words and attitude necessarily reflect this. A stage is reached when this air of superiority becomes a tradition to them and, in fact, wherever they can they even regard it to be part of religion. Thus the Brahmans in the Hindus, the Levites in the Israelites and the Quraysh in the Arabs had acquired a holy status for themselves which was difficult for others to challenge. This is what happened to every nation and in spite of its tall claims to human equality, this evil persists even today. So much so, Muslims who were supposed to uproot this evil have themselves succumbed to it and are now divided into countless tribes and clans and each regards itself to be superior to the other. An expression to this air of superiority can be witnessed every now and then in the statements and slogans of every race and tribe. As a natural result of this, hate and spite arise for one another which then assume the shape of enmity and envy and the stage is reached when they end up fighting and severing ties with one another.

Here the Qur'ān, in order to protect Muslims from this evil, has reminded them that the Almighty by His grace took them out from the darkness of ignorance and brought them forth into light. They should also remember that their society has been established on the principle of mutual brotherhood (اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِخْوَةٌ) and that they have

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been made merciful for one another (رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ). So they must not consider some of their brothers to be inferior or ridicule and make fun of them and in this manner distort the whole set up of the society.

The words عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ state the real wisdom in this regard: the basis of honour and respect is not race, clan, family, tribe and nation or riches; the real basis is a person's faith and piety, and on the Day of Judgement it will be decided as to who in the sight of God is more noble and who in spite of his tall claims to lineage and ancestry and vanity in his status has no significance before the Almighty.

Consider next the expression: وَلَا تَلْمِزُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ. The word لمز means to blame someone and to say something sarcastic to someone while gesturing towards him with the eye. Thus, for example, in Sūrah al-Tawbah, the words used for the hypocrites are: اَلَّذِيْنَ يَلْمِزُوْنَ الْمُطَّوِّعِيْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ. (٧٩:٩) (as for those who taunt the believers, (9:79)) i.e. when poor and indigent Muslims would spend in the way of God from their hard-earned money, the hypocrites in order to discourage them ridiculed them to demean them. They would typically remark: "Look at these! They are trying to become examples of generosity." Such statements not only reflect hate but also their arrogance. They are meant to dishearten others or to create envy for them – and both these things spread poison in the society.

The word اَنْفُسَكُمْ is used in this verse the way it is in: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ (٢٩:٤) (do not kill yourselves, (4:29)). It is evident from this usage that a Muslim who censures another Muslim in fact censures his own self because all Muslims on the principle of اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِخْوَةٌ are brothers to one another. In other words, a brother who ridicules and censures another brother is as if he aimed his arrow at his own chest and thereby wounded it.

The words تَنَابَزُوْا بِالْاَلْقَابِ mean "to call others with bad names." Just as calling a person or a nation with good names is to show respect and honour, calling someone with bad names is to demean and disrespect him. Derogatory names come to the tongue very easily and their effect is very far-reaching and permanent. The ill-will created by them remains for generations and a nation in which this tendency increases so much that poets, literary writers, editors and leaders spend all their intelligence in inventing bad names for their adversaries, should only pray for its well-being; its unity is bound to get divided. It needs to be kept in consideration that this tendency was at its peak among the Arabs. A poet and orator would be considered as the greatest in his nation if he was unrivalled in eulogizing the superiority of his nation and in censuring and humiliating others. If their satirical poetry is read, one can see how prominent a status they had in this regard. This proclivity of theirs never allowed them to unite as one nation. They would continue to try to overthrow and vanquish one another. For the first time in their history, Islam introduced unity and the brotherhood of faith in them as a result of which they became worthy of leading and guiding the world. The Qur'ān here has informed them of these evils of the age of *jāhiliyyah*: the Almighty has blessed them with faith and Islam and hence they should value and honour it and

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must not be lured away by Satan and not plunge into the abyss from which the Almighty has saved them.

Consider the next the part of the verse: بِئْسَ الِاسْمُ الْفُسُوْقُ بَعْدَ الْاِيْمَانِ. The words بِئْسَ and نِعْمَ are hyperbolic in nature. The exact meaningful translation of this sentence would be: "very evil is the name of *fisq* after faith." It is like saying: الشریر کأسمه (even the word naughty is bad, let alone the badness of being naughty). Even in our language we say: "Sir! Even the name of it stinks."

The addition بَعْدَ الْاِيْمَانِ (after faith) is pointing to the fact that if a person had not been introduced to faith and committed something of the nature of *fisq* (defiance), then this was not something odd at all; however, once the Almighty has made someone aware of the fragrance of faith and as is evident from the words وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَبَّبَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْاِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهٗ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ (but God has endeared faith to you and ingrained it in your hearts), then even the name of *fisq* should be abhorrent to him let alone *fisq* being committed by him.

It is evident from the above sentence of the verse that whatever things have been prohibited in the previous verses are of the category of *fisq* and the sensitivity of believers should be so sharp that they hate and detest the very name of *fisq*, let alone committing something of the sort.

The words: وَ مَنْ لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ very sternly warn people who even after this explanation commit some *fisq* of the sort specified above. The verse means that people who do not repent on these things should remember that they are wrong-doers. In other words, the Almighty has delineated the blessings of faith to them and also informed them of the consequences of disbelief and *fisq.* The responsibility is now on the people themselves. Those who, even after this conclusive communication of the truth, do not desist will definitely face the consequences and this will not be an act of injustice on the part of God; they themselves are the ones responsible for committing this injustice unto themselves.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوْا كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ ۫ اِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ اِثْمٌ وَّلَا تَجَسَّسُوْا وَلَا يَغْتَبْ بَّعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا ؕ اَيُحِبُّ اَحَدُكُمْ اَنْ يَّاْكُلَ لَحْمَ اَخِيْهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوْهُ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۲﴾[18]

Here the believers are addressed afresh and stopped from certain things which though apparently seem trivial, yet can potentially damage the heart of a person so much that it does not remain conducive to *taqwā*. Thus, people who hold faith dear must necessarily protect themselves from such evils. The first thing mentioned is that a person should not nurture ill-founded thoughts about others in his heart. He should not

18. Believers! Avoid being overly speculative, for some speculations are a blatant sin and do not pry on one another. And no one among you should indulge in backbiting others. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? So you regarded this to be abhorrent. And keep fearing God. Indeed, God is ever inclined to accepting repentance and is Ever-Merciful.

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harbour whatever evil thoughts that arise in him or others. It is but natural for good or bad thoughts to arise in one's heart about people whom one encounters in life. These thoughts establish or sever a person's relationship with another. Viewed thus, it is these thoughts which make and break relationships in a society. On the basis of the importance which thoughts occupy, a person should not carelessly accept or reject them; on the contrary, he should be very sharp and alive to them. In this regard, the guidance provided by Islam to its followers is that a Muslim must always think well of others unless it is proven to him that someone is not worthy of this. Thinking well of a person is an obvious requirement of the brotherhood of faith on which Islam has founded its society and which has been explained earlier. On the other hand, if a person adopts the attitude of entertaining and harbouring all sorts of ill-founded thoughts that come to his mind, then the example of such a person is that of a hunter who becomes so blind in his obsession for catching fish that he also catches snakes. Obviously, it is quite possible that a person who becomes blind in his obsession for catching fish ends up losing his own life one day as a result. The Qur'ān has stopped Muslims from this danger in that one must not start conjecturing too much because certain conjectures are blatant sins which may ruin a person. The guidance which emerges from this directive is that a person should not become so mentally sick as to think ill of others; on the contrary, he should always think well of others. If the deed or words of a person induce him to think ill of him, he should try as far as he can to make a good justification, if it can be made. He should only think to the contrary when he is unable to make any sound justification. It is better to think positively of a person who deserves to be thought of negatively than to think negatively of a person who deserves to be thought of positively. In Ḥadīth narratives, a believer is eulogized as: اَلْمُؤْمِنُ غِرٌّ كَرِيْمٌ (a believer is noble and innocent).[19] In these times, the favourite principle of people is that they should harbour ill-thoughts for others except if they prove themselves to be thought of otherwise; people regard this attitude to be one reflecting political acumen and think that this cleverness is necessary to deal with enemies. I have already explained this under the previous *sūrah's* verse: اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ. However, how can this political acumen be true for believers when they have been directed by the Qur'ān to be اَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (polite to the believers, (5:54)) and رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ (merciful to one another, (48:29)).

The second thing mentioned in the verse is وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوْا (and do not be inquisitive). Just as in the above part positive speculation is not forbidden but negative is, here also the prohibition actually relates to being inquisitive for an evil purpose. In other words, here the intention of a person is to try to find some fault or mistake in the private life of another person and have access to the secrets of his family and family life. Sometimes, the motive of this probing is jealousy for it soothes a person to find out such facts about someone he considers his rival. At other times, the motive is hatred

19. Abū Dā'ūd Sulymān ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sajistānī, *Sunan*, vol. 4 (n.p.: Dār al-fikr, n.d.), 251, (no. 4790).

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and animosity: he wants to humiliate another person by informing others of his faults. This latter tendency has now become a profession to which newspaper journalism has given a great impetus. Some journalists are in perpetual search of scandals and the journalist who is considered to be the most successful is the one who is able to lay his hands on a scandal in the private life of a famous person which makes his newspaper or journal sell like hot cakes. Such spying and probing is counter to mutual sympathy and brotherhood which are the foundations of an Islamic society; for this reason, Muslims have been stopped from indulging in them. On the other hand, probing which a Muslim does to find out the circumstances of another person so that he can help him in his difficulties and needs or the spying and probing which an Islamic state does to be fully informed about the circumstances of its citizens, is neither implied here nor is it prohibited. On the contrary, such spying is a very virtuous act on the part of a neighbour so that he is aware of the circumstances and problems which his neighbour is encountering and is able to help him out. Similarly, for a state, this attitude is not just an act of virtue, it is in fact its responsibility to arrange to be informed of the good or bad circumstances of its citizens so that it is able to properly discharge its duties.

The third directive mentioned is وَلَا يَغْتَبْ بَّعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا (and do not indulge in backbiting). Backbiting means speaking about the flaws of a person in his absence. The fact that this is done in his absence incorporates in the very meaning of backbiting the aspect that the targeted person does not get to know of it. In pursuance of keeping it secret, a backbiter gives his statements before people who hold the same opinion and are his confidants in sharing the objective with him or at least are people about whom he is sure that they are not ones who sympathize with the person he is targeting and will not reveal this secret to him. It is this aspect of backbiting which makes it a detestable and despicable act because through it neither is the objective of supporting the cause of the truth achieved nor is there any hope of reforming anyone through it. Through it, a coward is only able to vent his emotions.

There are some "positive-minded" people who think that every form of mentioning evil is backbiting. They think that the *jarḥ* of the Ḥadīth scholars on the narrators, bearing witness against someone in the court, censuring someone on an evil, reporting someone to the police, divulging a bad habit of a person to someone who wants to seek advice about him and other similar things all come under the head of backbiting; however, they have been deemed permissible because of "strategy." From here, they enunciate a legal precept: all the prohibitions of the *sharī'ah* are not eternal; hence they have the right to make them permissible if their strategy deems so. In my opinion, this is a great evil against religion and can lead to several other evils. Thus I have written independent articles to refute this view,[20] and here in this exegesis too, I will, in a succeeding section, throw light on some of its aspects.

20. See: Amīn, Aḥsan, Iṣlāḥī, *Maqālāt-i Iṣlāḥī*, 1st ed. (Lahore Faran Foundation, 1991), 79-189. (*Translator*)

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The words اَيُحِبُّ اَحَدُكُمْ اَنْ يَّاْكُلَ لَحْمَ اَخِيْهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوْهُ are meant to explain the horrific nature of backbiting with an example: a person who speaks ill of his brother in his absence is as if he is eating his flesh while he is dead and is unable to defend himself in any way. No one will like this; so when no one can tolerate it, why do people indulge in a similar despicable act of backbiting? The word مَيْتًا is an accusative of state from the *muḍāf* found in اَخِيْهِ. This is a portrayal of his helplessness in defending himself.

The words وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيْمٌ sound a warning as well as urge people to repent and reform themselves. The verse says: Fear God; those who become used to consuming the meat of their brother without any cost start cherishing this so much that they end up losing their faith. God has sounded a timely warning to them that they should try to protect themselves from this danger through repentance and self-reformation. If they repent, God is very eager to forgive them and to show mercy to them.

There are six things from which a person is stopped in these two verses (11 and 12). A little deliberation shows that the first of these three: making fun, defaming others and calling others by bad names are evils which a person commits openly; the other three evils: making bad estimations, being inquisitive and backbiting relate to the private lives of people and are done in the absence of the discussed person among close associates. Both these types of evil are forbidden on the basis of the Islamic principle of *tazkiyah* (self-purification) which is mentioned in the Qur'ān by the words: وَذَرُوْا ظَاهِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهٗ (٦:١٢٠) (and leave the hidden and the apparent aspect of a sin, (6:120)). Until a person cleanses himself of the evils which relate to his inner-self, the awareness of the fact that God knows what is hidden is not fully grounded in him. Without this, there is no responsibility of *taqwā* nurturing in a person's heart.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَّاُنْثٰى وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ شُعُوْبًا وَّقَبَآىِٕلَ لِتَعَارَفُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقٰىكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿١٣﴾[21]

By means of this general address, the evil of showing pride and vanity on one's lineage, family and tribe is uprooted in one stroke! People are told to fully keep in mind the fact that they are the progeny of one man and woman: all mankind was created from Adam and Eve; for this reason, no one holds superiority to others as far as his species is concerned. People have been divided into families and tribes only for identification and introduction. The Almighty has not granted superior status to any special family so that those belonging to it become more respectful in His eyes and they start regarding themselves to be superior to others. Just as the Almighty has made people distinct as far as their looks, colour and physiques are concerned so that people can identify one another, in the same manner he has created the divisions of families and tribes so that people can recognize one another. It has no significance beyond this.

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21. People! We have created you from one man and one woman and divided you into tribes and clans that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in God's sight is he who is the most God-conscious. Indeed, God is All-knowing and Wise.

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Thus the people of a family and clan should not think, in conceit, that they are more respectful in the sight of God and that they have been granted superiority to others. The basis of respect in the sight of God is *taqwā*. The most respectful in the sight of God is he who fears Him the most and is the most vigilant in abiding by the bounds and limits set by Him.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ imply that the Almighty will not be bothered the slightest in judging people on the basis of this standard. He knows everything and has knowledge of each and every word and deed of every person. He who is worthy of respect shall certainly gain a place of respect however unknown and of lowly origin he may be. And he who is not worthy of it, will be flung by the Almighty into a pit he deserves even though he may belong to a family as noble as the Quraysh and the Hashimites.

Some Guidance provided by the Previous Section of Verses

The guidance provided by the previous section of verses has been explained below them as far as was required; however, the evils of inquisitiveness and backbiting need further explanation which follows.

Since in these times the concept of freedom of an individual is so prevalent, some people think that just as Islam has stopped people from prying into the affairs of others, it has also stopped governments from prying into the affairs of its citizens. It should hold them accountable only in matters which openly come to their notice. As far as household affairs are concerned, they are beyond its jurisdiction of accountability. In support of this view, some people have cited the incident of the caliph 'Umar (rta)[22] in which one night he heard a person who was singing in his house. Being suspicious, he climbed the wall; he saw that liquor as well as a woman was present. He called out: "O Enemy of God! Do you think that you will disobey God and God will not reveal your secret?" The person responded by saying: "O Caliph of the Believers! Be not in haste; if I have sinned, you have committed three sins at the same time: God has forbidden inquisitiveness and you have done it; God has directed us to enter houses through their doors and you have entered by climbing the wall; God has directed not to enter a house without seeking permission and you have entered my house without my permission." At this, 'Umar (rta) acknowledged his mistake and did not proceed against that person; however, he did take a promise from him to adopt the way of righteousness.

Some people have recorded this narrative in books which relate to high morals and which urge and warn people to adopt good. However, neither is it reliable with regard to its chain of narration nor with regard to its content. As far as the weakness of the

22. See, for example: Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-ma'rifah, n.d.), 201.

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chain of narration is concerned, it suffices to say that many, especially the proponents of *taṣawwuf* do not, in principle, give any importance to investigation of chain of narration in matters of morality and exhortation. If a story carries an effective message, they readily cite it in their books without assessing its content and chain of narration.

As far as the text of the narrative which reports this incident is concerned, deliberation on it will show that it makes little sense.

Firstly, it is quite improbable that a person in Madīnah and that too in the times of the caliph 'Umar (rta) indulge in such merry-making in such a loud manner that he was overheard by 'Umar (rta) who chanced by and who thus had to interfere in this indecency. If right in the centre of the empire Satan was so bold in his practices of luring people, then it has to be conceded that even 'Umar (rta) could not over-awe Satan even though the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that Satan coils away from the path treaded by 'Umar (rta).

Secondly, if this incident is true, it will have to be conceded that 'Umar (rta) was not even aware of the directives of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as per which one was not allowed to enter houses by scaling walls and it was necessary to seek permission by offering salutations from outside; if permission was granted, one was to enter otherwise the person was to silently return after offering the salutations thrice. Can any sane person believe that a merry-maker for the first time informed 'Umar (rta) of these explicit directives of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. 'Umar (rta) never got a chance, God forbid, to recite Sūrah al-Nūr and Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt.

Thirdly, if 'Umar (sws) so obediently accepted these three mistakes, why did he not direct his governors and administrators to stop prying in the houses of people by confessing that till then he was at fault and that now he had realized his mistake? His act at the same time contains three practices which are against the *sharī'ah*; they should let people create whatever rumpus they want to create in their houses; if they have any doubt, they should offer the ceremonial salutations at the door step and seek permission for entry and if they are given permission, only then they should enter otherwise they should return after thrice offering these salutations. As far as I know, not only did 'Umar (rta) not send such a directive, there are numerous incidents recorded in history which show that his administrators continued to pry and be inquisitive and 'Umar (rta) himself indulged in this to the extent that when infants would cry at night, he would try to find out the reason for this.

Fourthly, if this narrative is accepted, it will have to be conceded that if in an Islamic state some people consume liquor in the confines of their houses, indulge in lecherous activities with women of loose character and throw dance and music parties and even accumulate ammunition like bombs and Sten guns, even then the police has no right to enter their houses and disturb their merry-making. So much so, even the caliph of the time does not have the authority to dare enter the houses of people without permission and if ever by mistake he does so, he should only gently ask the

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inhabitants to abstain from such an activity.

Though this narrative did not deserve any attention, yet in these times since people who are trying to establish an Islamic government have very emphatically presented it, I was forced to write these afore-mentioned paragraphs. Nonetheless, this narrative, in my opinion, is absolutely unreliable. An Islamic government is not only responsible for the peace, justice and security of a country, it also looks after the character and conduct of its citizens. Thus it has the right to pry wherever there is a doubt; however, exercising each right has some moral and legal restrictions which a government must also keep in consideration. If a government does not abide by these restrictions and even if there is no one to stop it from this high-handedness it shall be regarded as a criminal act in the sight of God. This is because it has wrongly exercised a right given to it to protect the citizens and their peace and justice. Instead of doing so, they harassed innocent citizens through its means.

As far as general masses are concerned, it is essential that they keep in consideration the following things:

– inquisitiveness and prying which is for the purpose of good, is based on pious intention and objective, is not only not forbidden, as has been explained earlier, it is in fact a very virtuous deed. The Qur'ān has directed believers to look for the self respecting poor and to try to take the initiative in reaching them; they should not be expected to ardently beg for their needs.

– if there is a doubt about someone that his clandestine activities are a danger to the life, honour and wealth of innocent people or he wants to harm the peace, justice and security of the country, then people should not ignore him thinking that his activities are not their business. People should try to reform him and if it is not possible for them, then help should be sought from those who are in a position to do so or are able to stop him. This responsibility has been taught to the believers by giving the example of the passengers of a ship.[23]

– If a personal mistake of a person which is confined to his own self comes to the notice of someone, he should try to counsel him if he is in a position to do so. If he is not, he should ignore his fault and conceal it. God also hides the flaws of people who hide the faults of others. However, if this fault is contagious in nature, then a person should follow the directive of the Prophet (sws) which relates to curbing evil.

The dominant reason in people not being able to understand the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth is because people do not reflect on the occasion and background of Qur'ānic verses and prophetic narratives. No doubt, there are narratives which mention concealing the sins of a Muslim brother; however, if a person, merely on the basis of these narratives, passes the verdict that one should not have any concern regarding the vice and virtue of others and that one must mind one's own business and that if some evil comes to

23. The parable goes like this: If anyone finds a passenger of a ship chopping a hole in the hull, it is his duty to take the axe away, however he has to do that, or else everyone will drown.

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one's notice, one should conceal it so that in the Hereafter God conceals our sins too, then though there is a narrative to support this verdict, it will cause great confusion in the minds of people. This is because there are narratives which explicitly state that if a person sees an evil he should curb it with his hands; if this is not possible, he should try to curb it through his tongue and if even this is not possible, he should regard it to be evil in his heart; there is no level of faith below it.[24]

This confusion obviously has arisen because enough effort has not been expended into determining the occasion and background of both these narratives. If this is ascertained, no confusion arises. If a person is urinating while standing, one can ignore him thinking that he might have some excuse; if the excuse is not evident, one can even earnestly counsel him that urinating in this manner is against the norms of decency as well as against Islamic etiquette. If one is not in a position to counsel him, then one should hide this ill-mannered behaviour of his and not advertise it. *Inshā'Allāh*, God will reward this act. However, if it is known about a person that he has set up a liquor manufacturing plant in his house or has stacked hashish or has hidden arms and ammunition or is running a brothel and one who is in a position to report this to the authorities covers it up thinking that God will cover his sins on the Day of Judgement, then this, in my opinion, is mere wishful thinking. People who adopt this attitude might end up losing their faith, let alone earning reward.

On the issue of backbiting as well, these people have created a similar confusion because of a lack of deliberation. They have forgotten that just as the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth mention the prohibition of backbiting they have similarly positively directed Muslims in a very explicit manner to assess reporting by investigating the narrators, to bear true witness, to curb evil and to be well-wishers of Muslims. When the question arose of reconciling these two types of directives and people could not understand how this could be done, they reconciled them by saying that all these things came under the head of backbiting but they have been declared lawful because of strategy. This is in spite of the fact that investigation of narrators, bearing witness, curbing evil and well-wishing of Muslims are not merely allowed in religion; they have in fact been made obligatory by it. The grace and perfection of the Islamic system depend on them. The discipline of *sharī'ah* is based on investigation of narrators; bearing witness is the responsibility of this *ummah* for which it had been instituted in this world. The life and sustenance of this *ummah* has been made dependent by God on the responsibility of curbing evil; similarly, being well-wishers of Muslims is not only a requirement of being in the fraternity it is also a requirement of faith, as has been mentioned in this *sūrah.* As far as backbiting is concerned, it has a specific sphere which I have already explained while discussing the verse. Its prohibition in no way stops or interferes in religious obligations, nor under a strategy does it need to be legalized to carry them out. Neither have the scholars of Ḥadīth allowed it nor

24. See, for example: Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 42, (no. 177).

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revivalists nor reformers and nor can ever a need arise for a Muslim to allow it in order to fulfil certain religious obligations imposed on him. If ever this need can arise, it can only be for the people who have made the Islamic *sharī'ah* a playground for their strategy.

Section III: Verse (15-18)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah* in which the inner personalities of people whose attitude was condemned in the first five verses are revealed. I had indicated earlier that certain tribes which lived around Madīnah had entered the fold of the Muslims when they saw the rising might of Islam; however, since they were far off from the centre, they were lacking in training and instruction. For this reason, they harboured the conceited notion that they had done a great favour to the Prophet (sws) and to Islam as they had embraced faith without any war being waged against them. It is obvious that in such a state of mind how could they have displayed the manners and etiquette that their faith entailed? Thus they, at times, would do something against proper etiquette for which they were rebuked in the initial verses. However, the nature of address was general so that whichever ones were inflicted with these blemishes could reform themselves. Consequently, the guidance this situation demanded was given. Now, here at the end, they are addressed by name and their real malady has been exposed so that they turn towards its remedy. The reason is that in its presence, it is impossible for faith to blossom.

In the light of this background, readers may recite the succeeding verses:

Text and Translation

قَالَتِ الْاَعْرَابُ اٰمَنَّا ؕ قُلْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَلٰكِنْ قُوْلُوْٓا اَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْاِيْمَانُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ تُطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ
لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِّنْ اَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا
بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ قُلْ اَتُعَلِّمُوْنَ اللّٰهَ بِدِيْنِكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا
فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٦﴾ يَمُنُّوْنَ عَلَيْكَ اَنْ اَسْلَمُوْا ؕ قُلْ لَّا تَمُنُّوْا عَلَيَّ اِسْلَامَكُمْ ۚ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ
هَدٰىكُمْ لِلْاِيْمَانِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

The Bedouins declared: "We have embraced faith." Tell them: "You have not embraced faith; rather say: "We have shown obedience," and faith has not yet found its way into your hearts. And if you obey God and the Messenger, God will not reduce your deeds the slightest. God is Forgiving and Merciful. True believers are those who professed faith in God and His Messenger and then were never inflicted with any doubt, and who fought with their wealth and with their persons for the cause of God.

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Such are the truthful. (14-15)

Tell them: "Are you informing God of your religion, even though God knows what is in the heavens and in the earth and God has knowledge of all things?" (16)

They regard embracing Islam to be a favour to you: Tell them: "Do not regard embracing faith to be a favour to me; in fact, it is God's favour to you that He guided you to faith, if you are truthful. God knows all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth. And God is watching whatever you do." (17-18)

Explanation

قَالَتِ الْاَعْرَابُ اٰمَنَّا ؕ قُلْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَلٰكِنْ قُوْلُوْٓا اَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْاِيْمَانُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ تُطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِّنْ اَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۴﴾[25]

The Bedouins alluded to in this verse refer to the villagers who lived in the environs of Madīnah and who have been mentioned earlier in the *sūrah* as the ones who, when they conversed with the Prophet, (sws) addressed him in the manner they would address someone equal to them. When they went to meet him, their wish would be that the Prophet (sws) meet them without any delay as soon they arrived. So much so, if he was in his house, they would not care to wait and would start calling his name from outside his house. This rudeness in their conduct was not only due to lack of training and instruction but also because they thought that they had done a favour to the Prophet (sws) by embracing faith without waging war. As a result, they reckoned that they should be rewarded by the Prophet (sws) considering they had done a favour to him and that he should at all times pamper them. It is this mentality of theirs which is criticized here.

The words قَالَتِ الْاَعْرَابُ اٰمَنَّا mean: The Bedouins say: "We have embraced faith." By this statement of theirs, they did not merely lay claim to faith but as will become evident from later verses they said this to express their having done a favour to the Prophet (sws). At every instance, they would try to communicate to the Prophet (sws) that by embracing faith they had increased his respect and honour. They also reckoned that they were worthy as a result of that and that the Prophet (sws) give them due consideration and whole-heartedly accept whatever suggestions they gave.

The words قُلْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَ لٰكِنْ قُوْلُوْٓا اَسْلَمْنَا actually form an answer given to those people through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). They are told that their claim to faith is not true; the only claim they can make is that of obedience. The word اِسْلَام is used here in its literal meaning: "outward obedience." The real meaning of اِسْلَام is to submit totally to God. However, it is also used merely in the meaning of outward obedience. I have

25. The Bedouins declared: "We have embraced faith." Tell them: "You have not embraced faith; rather say: "We have shown obedience," and faith has not yet found its way into your hearts. And if you obey God and the Messenger, God will not reduce your deeds the slightest. God is Forgiving and Merciful.

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explained both these meanings at an appropriate place in this exegesis. Here it is used in the second of these meanings. It has been mentioned earlier that these people had accepted Islam because they were over-awed with its rising political force and not because of the call itself. For this reason, the spirit of Islam had not yet found its way in their hearts; they had only come into subservience to the political sovereignty of Islam. Pointing to this reality they are told that it is not correct for them to lay claim to faith; all they can say is that they have become subservient to the political force of Islam. Concealed in this answer is the fact that since this is the case, they have done no favour and should not be presented thus; this too is a form of subservience; the only difference is that they have been made subservient without waging any war and this is not something which they can boast about as a favour.

The words وَلَمَّا يَدۡخُلِ الۡاِيۡمَانُ فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِكُمۡ express the fact that they should not make tall claims to faith. It has knocked at the doors of their hearts but has not yet entered them. Such faith is not acceptable to God. The faith acceptable to God is one which takes strong root and influences one so much that it becomes difficult for a person to think or do something disregarding it.

The words وَ اِنۡ تُطِيۡعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوۡلَهٗ لَا يَلِتۡكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَعۡمَالِكُمۡ شَيۡـًٔا sound a warning to them at their attitude of boastfulness under discussion. Why should they boast about accepting faith and doing some service to Islam? God is not going to reduce any of their deeds; in fact, he is going to reward every deed, big or small. They will be rewarded seventy times for a good deed. Each deed of theirs will be useful only to them and not to God. So when they are doing something to benefit their own selves, why should they express this as a favour to God and His Prophet (sws)?

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ mean that God is forgiving and ever merciful. He will forgive their blemishes and faults and not reduce their reward to the slightest extent. There should not be the minutest fear that He will use their small faults as an excuse to reduce the weight of their deeds.

Also implied here is that if till then they had wrongly felt that they had done a favour to God and His Prophet (sws) by doing some service, they should now reform themselves after this warning. They should seek forgiveness from God. He will forgive them. He is Most-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful.

اِنَّمَا الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوۡلِهٖ ثُمَّ لَمۡ يَرۡتَابُوۡا وَ جٰهَدُوۡا بِاَمۡوَالِهِمۡ وَ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾[26]

It is said that every claimant to faith cannot be regarded as a believer. True believers

26. True believers are those who professed faith in God and His Messenger and then were never inflicted with any doubt, and who fought with their wealth and with their persons for the cause of God. Such are the truthful.

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in the sight of God are only those who profess faith in God and His Prophet (sws) with their hearts and then are never inflicted with any doubt; they wage war in the cause of God through both their persons and their wealth. They spend their wealth for the support of religion and if the need arises to sacrifice their lives, they never desist from it. The verse says that it is these people who are true in their claim to faith. Those who make tall claims to faith but because of their hesitancy are neither ready to bear any loss for the cause nor have the courage to sacrifice their life and wealth for it are only boastful fanatics. They have no worth in the sight of God.

Deliberation will show that the words وَجٰهَدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ are mentioned to show their clarity and lack of hesitancy. If a person does not abstain from sacrificing his life and wealth to achieve his objective, then this is an irrefutable evidence of the fact that he is fully convinced of the veracity of his objective. If he is neither willing to sacrifice his wealth nor endanger his life, then however vehemently he declares his love for his objective, his practice shows that he is still not convinced of it.

قُلْ اَتُعَلِّمُوْنَ اللّٰهَ بِدِيْنِكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۶﴾ [27]

These people very condescendingly say that they have embraced faith. The Prophet (sws) is told to ask them whether they are trying to inform God of their faith. If this is what they have in mind, then they he should tell them that He knows whatever is between the heavens and the earth and is aware of everything. He is both potentially and practically aware of everything. Nothing can remain hidden from Him. The implication is that if they are very proud of their faith, then they should boast it before someone who is unaware of it. What use is it of boasting it before someone who is aware of everything – open or hidden – in this universe? Would He Who knows everything not know the extent of their faith?

يَمُنُّوْنَ عَلَيْكَ اَنْ اَسْلَمُوْا ؕ قُلْ لَّا تَمُنُّوْا عَلَيَّ اِسْلَامَكُمْ ۚ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ هَدٰىكُمْ لِلْاِيْمَانِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾ [28]

After revealing the reality behind their claim to faith, their claim to Islam is also brought to light. These people express their favour to the Prophet (sws) in that they have accepted Islam. In other words, it is their conceited claim that by accepting Islam they have increased his respect and increased the majesty of Islam. Thus they regard themselves to have done a favour to Islam and the Prophet (sws) and think that it is the duty of the Prophet (sws) to respect the favour they have done to him. The verse says that the Prophet (sws) should tell them to not boast of their favour to him. If they

27. Tell them: "Are you informing God of your religion, even though God knows what is in the heavens and in the earth and God has knowledge of all things?"

28. They regard embracing Islam to be a favour to you: Tell them: "Do not regard embracing faith to be a favour to me; in fact, it is God's favour to you that He guided you to faith, if you are truthful."

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are really truthful in their claim, then they have not done a favour to the Prophet (sws) rather it is God Who has done them a favour in that He has guided them to faith. The words اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ should be deliberated upon. They imply that in the very first place, their claim to faith is mere bragging and if there is some truth in their claim, then they should be grateful to God that He has given them the willingness to accept it. The preposition of ل after هداكم incorporates the meaning of "urge and willingness" (ta*wfīq*) in this sentence. I have already explained this style at an appropriate place in this exegesis.

It is evident from this discussion that if a person does a small or great service to religion, he neither does a favour to God and His Messenger nor to religion; in fact, he does a favour to his own self because he sows seeds for his own future. It is God Who has actually done him a favour by giving him the urge and willingness to serve His religion and in this way opened up the way to eternal success for him. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the answer has not been given by the tongue of the Prophet (sws) to these people viz. they should not say that they have done a favour to him; it is his favour to them that he has opened the way of guidance to them. Had his answer been given, there was a place for it; however, what best a prophet can do is to expend all his efforts in trying to bring people to the right path; he does not, however, have the authority to grant them the urge and willingness to accept faith. That comes only by the authority of God and the whole matter depends on this very urge and willingness.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ غَيۡبَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيۡرٌۢ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۸﴾[29]

The subject discussed in verse 16 is brought up here in a different style: they should not present their faith and religion as means of expressing their favour to the Prophet (sws) and to Islam. God is fully aware of all the secrets of the heavens and the earth and people should bear in mind that God is watching all their deeds. The implication is that the real thing is not the claim but to practice what they claim. If they practice thus, their claim will find weight with God even if they do not express it and if they do not, then it will have no weight before Him however vociferously they make this claim.

With the blessing of God, I come to the end of the exegesis of this group. فَالۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (so gratitude be to God for this).

Raḥmānābād,
13th December, 1976 AD
20th Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 1396 AH

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29. "God knows all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth. And God is watching whatever you do."

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah Qāf (50)

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Sūrah Qāf

A Brief Look at the *Sūrahs* of the Group

With this *sūrah* begins the sixth group. Altogether there are seventeen *sūrahs.* Among these the first seven *sūrahs* – Qāf, al-Dhāriyāt, al-Ṭūr, al-Najm, al-Raḥmān and al-Wāqi‘ah – are Makkan. Some codices mention that Sūrah al-Raḥmān is Madīnan; however, it will become evident from its exegesis that this opinion is baseless. Not a single verse of the *sūrah* is Madīnan, let alone the whole *sūrah.* The next ten *sūrahs* after Sūrah al-Wāqi‘ah – al-Ḥadīd, al-Mujādalah, al-Ḥashr, al-Mumtaḥinah, al-Ṣaff, al-Jumu‘ah, al-Taghābun, al-Ṭalāq and al-Taḥrīm are Madīnan.

The comprehensive central theme of this whole group is resurrection on the Day of Judgement. It will be seen highlighted in all its Makkan *sūrahs.* Though the basic topics of the Qur’ān have also been mentioned in this group the way they are in other groups, however, they are mentioned under this comprehensive central theme. Analogously, the Madīnan *sūrahs* included in this group too are subservient to this theme. The necessary corollary of faith in being resurrected again is complete obedience to God and His Prophet (sws). In the Madīnan *sūrahs*, those requisites of this very obedience are mentioned which were necessitated by the circumstances of revelation.

In the Makkan *sūrahs*, the debate is against the beliefs and notions of the disbelievers of the Quraysh, and it is they who are primarily the addresses in these *sūrahs.* If the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims are addressed, then the nature of this address is to assure and comfort them. In the Madīnan *sūrahs*, the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims are addressed. In particular, the weaknesses of those people are discussed who claimed to have faith in God and the Prophet (sws) but were not yet fully aware of the requisites of faith. In this regard, the People of the Book too are discussed. One reason for this is that in that period they had jumped in to support the Quraysh and oppose Islam. The second reason for this is that most Hypocrites which had penetrated into the ranks of the Muslims were under the influence of these People of the Book.

Central Theme

The central theme of this *sūrah* is to substantiate life after death. When the Qur’ān informed people that once they die, they will be raised to life again and will be held accountable before the Almighty for their words and deeds, the Quraysh frowned at this. They contended that a person from amongst themselves by claiming to be a

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prophet is warning them that after death people will be raised to life again? How is it possible that once people die and decay, they will be re-created. In this *sūrah*, this very notion of the people that the Day of Judgement is improbable is discussed and the objections raised about it are answered.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-5): The grandeur and magnificence of the Qur'ān bear witness that it is the word of God. Those who are regarding it as the work of a poet or a soothsayer are merely doing so as an excuse to deny the Day of Judgement. They are actually confounded that someone from amongst themselves is warning them that after they die and become dust they will be returned to life again. This according to them is very unlikely. Actually pride and vanity have led them to reject the Qur'ān and owing to this reason they are calling it a work of poetry and soothsaying. The Qur'ān does not belong to these categories; it is a truth and since they have denied this truth, they are in a state of acute mental confusion and obvious contradiction. They should be aware that even what the earth consumes of their bodies is in the knowledge of God and with Him is a register which records all what they say and do.

Verses (6-11): A reference is made to the signs of the heavens and the earth which if benefited from bear evidence to the Day of Judgement and to the reward and punishment that will be given to mankind on that Day as well as to the belief of *tawḥīd* (monotheism). These signs testify to the power and wisdom of the Almighty and to the various means of sustenance He has created in the heavens and the earth for mankind. These signs are meant to remind and caution those who are humble and those who turn to God.

Verses (12-14): The disbelievers of the Quraysh are warned that they should not deny the truth because of pride and arrogance. Nations before them who were guilty of this crime were totally destroyed, and if they continue with this attitude, their fate will be no different.

Verses (15-18): The Almighty's attributes of Knowledge and Creativity which prove the certainty of the Day of Judgement are alluded to and a reference is also made to the arrangement He has made for the security and protection of the records of all the deeds and utterances of mankind.

Verses (19-35): A vivid description of the Day of Judgement is drawn: the details of the dreadful fate the disbelievers will encounter and the good fate the believers will meet are highlighted.

Verses (36-37): The Quraysh are warned that they must not be overcome by the pride of the power they possess and must not vainly reckon that their glory and grandeur are eternal: Many other nations, who had much more power and splendour were destroyed at the very height of their dominance and authority; they could not even find any room in the vastness of the earth to hide from the ruthless law of retribution. Indeed, in the account of these nations is a lesson for people whose hearts are heedful and who

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earnestly give ear.

Verses (38-45): The Prophet (sws) is urged to persevere and to persist in the cause of truth, and seek perseverance from God with the help of the prayer. He is told to defer the matter of his enemies to the Day of Judgement, which is certain to come. Furthermore, he is assured that his only responsibility is to warn them of this Day; to make them accept faith is not his responsibility. He should only admonish through this very Qur'ān those who fear God, and if they are making fun of it, they themselves will face its consequences.

Text and Translation

Section I: Verses (1-15)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

قٓ ۚ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ الْمَجِيْدِ ۝١ بَلْ عَجِبُوْٓا اَنْ جَآءَهُمْ مُّنْذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَقَالَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا شَيْءٌ عَجِيْبٌ ۝٢ ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا
تُرَابًا ۚ ذٰلِكَ رَجْعٌۢ بَعِيْدٌ ۝٣ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا تَنْقُصُ الْاَرْضُ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَعِنْدَنَا كِتٰبٌ حَفِيْظٌ ۝٤ بَلْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ فَهُمْ
فِيْٓ اَمْرٍ مَّرِيْجٍ ۝٥ اَفَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوْٓا اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنٰهَا وَزَيَّنّٰهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوْجٍ ۝٦ وَالْاَرْضَ مَدَدْنٰهَا وَاَلْقَيْنَا
فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍۢ بَهِيْجٍ ۝٧ تَبْصِرَةً وَّ ذِكْرٰى لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيْبٍ ۝٨ وَنَزَّلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً مُّبٰرَكًا
فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا بِهٖ جَنّٰتٍ وَّحَبَّ الْحَصِيْدِ ۝٩ وَالنَّخْلَ بٰسِقٰتٍ لَّهَا طَلْعٌ نَّضِيْدٌ ۝١٠ رِّزْقًا لِّلْعِبَادِ ۙ وَاَحْيَيْنَا بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا ۭ كَذٰلِكَ
الْخُرُوْجُ ۝١١ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ وَّاَصْحٰبُ الرَّسِّ وَثَمُوْدُ ۝١٢ وَعَادٌ وَّفِرْعَوْنُ وَاِخْوَانُ لُوْطٍ ۝١٣ وَّاَصْحٰبُ الْاَيْكَةِ وَقَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ۭ
كُلٌّ كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ وَعِيْدِ ۝١٤ اَفَعَيِيْنَا بِالْخَلْقِ الْاَوَّلِ ۭ بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ لَبْسٍ مِّنْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ ۝١٥

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

This is Sūrah Qāf. By the glorious Qur'ān! In fact, these people were confounded by the fact that a warner from amongst themselves had come to them. So these disbelievers had said: "It is a very strange thing that after we die and become dust, we would be returned to life again. Such a return is very improbable." (1-3) gather

Even what the earth consumes of their bodies is in Our notice and with Us is also a preserving book. In fact, they have denied the truth after it has come to them. So, they are now in a state of blatant contradiction regarding their views. (4-5)

Have they not observed the sky above them? How We have fashioned and adorned it, and it has no fissure in it. And We spread the earth and set upon it mountains, and brought forth in it all kinds of beautiful things for the insight and reminder for every heedful person. And We sent down blessed water from the skies with which We thence brought forth gardens and the harvest grain and tall palm trees stacked with clusters of dates as a means of sustenance for men, And thereby We enlivened a dead piece of land. Likewise, after death shall you rise from the earth. (6-11)

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Before them the people of Noah and the dwellers of the al-Rass valley, the Thamūd, the ʻĀd, the Pharaoh, the brethren of Lot, the companions of al-Aykah and the people of Tubbʻa also denied. All of them denied the messengers. So, Our punishment descended upon them. Were We not able to create the first time? In fact, these people are in doubt about being created a second time. (12-15)

Explanation

قٓ ۚ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ الْمَجِيْدِ ۚ﴿۱﴾[1]

قٓ is the name of this *sūrah*. The inchoative (*mubtadā'*) here is also suppressed, as has been indicated at many instances in this exegesis. If this suppression is unfolded, the meaning would be: This is Sūrah Qāf.

The word مَجِيدٌ means "glorious" and "exalted." It has been used in the Qur'ān as an attribute both for God and for the Qur'ān itself. Every discourse is a reflection of its author. Just as God is glorious and exalted, His word is also glorious and exalted and this is evident from each and every verse of the Qur'ān. It is not possible that a person of taste read or hear the Qur'ān and be not impressed and over-awed by its glory and majesty. If someone is not influenced by its glory and majesty, then it only means that he is a thick-headed person and that his heart has totally become devoid of the ability to savour the truth. This discourse would have shattered the mountains to pieces had it been revealed to them, let alone human beings, as is referred to by the Qur'ān.

The sentence وَالْقُرْاٰنِ الْمَجِيْدِ signifies an oath. The Almighty has sworn by this exalted Book. I have been explaining at various places of this exegesis that all such oaths signify bearing witness. They are sworn to bear witness on a claim which forms the complement of oath. This oath substantiates its complement even though the latter is not mentioned in words. The complement of oath (*muqsam 'alayh*) is suppressed at places where the context is enough to indicate it. A very clear example of such a suppression exists in Sūah Ṣuʻād: 37:1-3.[2] By reflecting on the discourse, it becomes evident that the glory and majesty of the Qur'ān is sworn by to refute the claim of people who regard it to be of the category of poetry, magic, soothsaying and inspiration of Satan. By presenting the majesty of the Qur'ān as evidence, these people are warned that it does not belong to these genres. Its own existence bears witness to the fact that its source is not these ignoble things; in fact it is a revelation sent down by God Almighty through Gabriel and its origin is the guarded tablet. In an exactly similar context, it is said in Sūrah al-Burūj:

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْاٰنٌ مَّجِيْدٌ. فِيْ لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوْظٍ. (۸۵: ۲۱-۲۲)

In fact, this is an exalted Qur'ān and its origin is in the preserved tablet. (85:21-

1. This is Sūrah Qāf. By the glorious Qur'ān!
2. For details, see: Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 5, 509-510.

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22)

This same topic is mentioned in Sūrah al-Takwīr in the following words:

اِنَّهٗ لَقَوْلُ رَسُوْلٍ كَرِيْمٍ.ذِیْ قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِی الْعَرْشِ مَكِيْنٍ.مُّطَاعٍ ثَمَّ اَمِيْنٍ.وَ مَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُوْنٍ.وَ لَقَدْ رَاٰهُ بِالْاُفُقِ الْمُبِيْنِ.وَ مَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِيْنٍ.وَ مَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطٰنٍ رَّجِيْمٍ.فَاَيْنَ تَذْهَبُوْنَ.اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ. (٥٠: ١٩-٢٧)

This is the word brought by a noble messenger. He is endued with great power and held in honour before the Lord of the Throne. He is obeyed and moreover very trustworthy. And this companion of yours is not one possessed, and he saw him in the clear horizon and he is not avaricious for the Unseen, and this is not the utterance of an accursed devil. Whither then are you going? This is nothing but a reminder to the people of the world. (50:19-27)

It is to this exaltedness and majesty of the Qur'ān that besides other verses like: لَا يَاْتِيْهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهٖ. (٤١:٤٢) (falsehood cannot reach it from in front of it nor from behind, (41:42)) and لَا يَمَسُّهٗۤ اِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُوْنَ. (٥٦:٧٩) (none touch except the purified, (56:79)) point to. The arguments cited at the end of Sūrah al-Shu'arā' in order to absolve the Qur'ān from the blame of being a poetical utterance and soothsaying have already been elucidated in the explanation of the verse. It would be worthwhile to specially look up what has been written under the following verse: وَمَا تَنَزَّلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيٰطِيْنُ.وَ مَا يَنْۢبَغِيْ لَهُمْ وَ مَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ. (٢٦: ٢١٠-٢١١) (it was not the devils who brought this down; neither are they worthy of it nor is it in their power, (26:210-211)).

The implication is that the miraculous eloquence and supreme wisdom of the Qur'ān are enough to refute people who are ignoring the warnings of the Qur'ān regarding the Hereafter by taking refuge in the excuse that it is not divine revelation and is in fact a revelation from Satan. Naïve are those who regard it to be inspired from Satan. It is not the utterance of Satan or some jinn; it has been revealed by the Almighty Who is mighty and wise. It is not an ordinary discourse; it is unique and unparalleled.

بَلْ عَجِبُوْٓا اَنْ جَآءَهُمْ مُّنْذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَقَالَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا شَیْءٌ عَجِيْبٌ ۖ﴿٢﴾ ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا ۚ ذٰلِكَ رَجْعٌۢ بَعِيْدٌ ﴿٣﴾[3]

The word بَلْ here shows that the Qur'ān has regarded this objection to be mere

3. In fact, these people were confounded by the fact that a warner from amongst themselves had come to them. So, these disbelievers had said: "It is a very strange thing that after we die and become dust, we would be returned to life again. Such a return is very improbable."

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excuse to escape the reality. If the insinuations of this بَلْ are divulged, the whole discourse would be something to the effect: The majesty and exaltedness of the Qur'ān alone is sufficient to refute those who regard the Qur'ān to be inspired by Satan or some jinn; the real reason for their evasion is not what they are expressing but it is that they are surprised at the fact that a person from amongst themselves is warning them – warning them that after dying they will be raised to life again. Since regarding someone to be a messenger of God weighs down heavily on their hearts, they have started saying that how can they be raised to life again after they die and their bodies decay and such a thing is very improbable. A deep deliberation on this verse will show that in the view of the Qur'ān the real reason of their evasion is their arrogance: they are not ready to accept someone among them as a messenger of God; for this reason, they do not accept the Qur'ān to be the word of God and regard the Hereafter to be an unlikely event. In other words, had arrogance not got the better of them, they were not so thick headed as to not distinguish between a divine discourse and the nonsensical utterance of soothsayers and be unable to understand the arguments which the Qur'ān is presenting before them to validate the Day of Judgement.

The details of this arrogance can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. In the first place, these people were never convinced that a messenger was needed to guide them and if in the second place they were to some extent convinced of this, they reckoned that if the Almighty intended to send a messenger He would have chosen an angel for this purpose or someone among the leaders of Makkah and Ṭā'if. In the presence of these messengers, how is it possible that He appoint a messenger who is a pauper.

The answers to these objections have been given in detail in the previous *sūrahs*, in particular *sūrahs* of group 4 which begin with Sūrah al-Furqān. The comprehensive central theme of that group is to affirm the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws). Here, keeping in view the central theme of this particular group, those objections are dealt with which they would raise on death and on the possibility of resurrection. They would use these objections, as is indicated earlier, an excuse to oppose the Prophet (sws).

قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا تَنْقُصُ الْاَرْضُ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَعِنْدَنَا كِتٰبٌ حَفِيْظٌ ﴿۴﴾[4]

Raising the dead back to life is being regarded as improbable because these people think that it is impossible for body parts to be put together once they decay and decompose within the earth. The reason for this misconception is that they analogously regard the knowledge of God to be like their own whereas the knowledge of God is all-embracing. The parts of a human body which decompose in the earth are

4. Even what the earth consumes of their bodies is in Our notice and with Us is also a preserving book.

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well in His knowledge; nothing is hidden from Him. How can anything be hidden from someone who has created everything and on whose command death overcomes a person. The words used in Sūrah al-Mulk are: اَلَا يَعۡلَمُ مَنۡ خَلَقَ. (۱٤:٦٧) (would He not know Who has created? (67:14)). And when He knows, He will make available all these body components and create bodies afresh. He will not be bothered the least for this task. He created everything from mere nothingness and was not pushed to the slightest; how can He face any difficulty in gathering their dispersed body parts?

The words وَعِنۡدَنَا كِتٰبٌ حَفِيۡظٌ signify that except for God's personal knowledge, He has set up a register to preserve the record of everything; written in this register is who is buried in which section of the earth and where his body parts are; similarly, also recorded are all his deeds and words. Just as naïve people are confronted with this doubt about the Hereafter that who can possibly gather the decayed parts of human beings which have become part of the earth and give them new physical forms, they are also similarly afflicted with the doubt that who can possibly keep record of all the words and deeds of each and every individual so that he can one day call all to account and reward or punish them? These words dispel this doubt as well: the Almighty has preserved the record of all the words and deeds of humankind in a register.

Preserving this record could have been a source of wonder for the Arabs of the times of the Prophet (sws); however, if a person aware of the scientific advancements of today has doubts about this claim of the Qur'ān, then the greatest of arguments cannot convince such stubborn people; such people will only believe when their accounts are handed over to them – but believing at that time will of no use to them.

بَلۡ كَذَّبُوۡا بِالۡحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمۡ فَهُمۡ فِىۡۤ اَمۡرٍ مَّرِيۡجٍ ۝[5]

The word حَقّ as used in verses 19 and 42 of this *sūrah* signifies the Hereafter; however, it is evident from the words لَمَّا جَآءَهُمۡ (when it came to them) that in this verse it signifies the Qur'ān which is informing people of the Hereafter but people are denying it; they are putting forth as excuses the doubts which were referred to in the previous verses to deny it; these people through these doubts are trying to give the impression that the Hereafter is in fact highly improbable and that if they are denying it, they have very cogent reasons for it. However, the fact of the matter is that they have denied an obvious reality and that too when it came to them with full clarity.

It is evident from the words لَمَّا جَآءَهُمۡ that the Hereafter which the Qur'ān is informing people of was an incontestable reality even earlier but till now if they were raising doubts against it they did have an excuse for they were unlettered people who were not aware of the Books of God; however, what excuse can they put forth now when

5. In fact, they have denied the truth after it has come to them. So, they are now in a state of blatant contradiction regarding their views.

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they are denying a reality which is shinning over their heads like the midday sun.

The expression اَمۡرٍ مَّرِيۡجٍ in فَهُمۡ فِیۡۤ اَمۡرٍ مَّرِيۡجٍ is explained by lexicographers as أمرمختلط and أمر ملتبس which means a situation in which there is a very clear contradiction and conflict.[6] The word مَرَجَ means to mix up. In Sūrah al-Raḥmān, it is said: مَرَجَ الۡبَحۡرَيۡنِ يَلۡتَقِيٰنِ.(١٩:٥٥) (He has let loose the two oceans: they meet one another, (55:19)). This word portrays very precisely the situation in which these people found themselves in after rejecting the Qur'ān: they were in a state of contradiction with regard to their views, for on the one hand, they affirm God and all His attributes which necessitate the Day of Judgement and on the other hand deny the Day of Judgement which is an obvious requirement of this affirmation. In this manner, they are inflicted with such a mental anxiety that they are not finding any way to get out from it. The only way to come out of it is the one which the Qur'ān is informing them of; however, they are not prepared to accept it whereas the essential outcome of denying the truth is that in order to justify this denial whatever excuse a person tries to fashion out only brings out the baselessness of his stance. The Qur'ān has pointed to this contradiction of stance in Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt the counterpart of this *sūrah* in the following words: اِنَّكُمۡ لَفِیۡ قَوۡلٍ مُّخۡتَلِفٍ (٨:٥١) (indeed you are in a state of great contradiction, (51:8)). This issue has been fully explained in Sūrah Naml under the following verse: بَلِ ادّٰرَكَ عِلۡمُهُمۡ فِی الۡاٰخِرَةِ (٦٦:٢٧) (in fact their knowledge about the Hereafter is in doubt, (27:66). Readers may look it up in case they want to study it in detail.

It may be kept in consideration that the greatest role in a person being misguided is played by this contradiction in his stance: either because of laziness he gathers in his mind all kinds of correct and incorrect views or while pursuing his whims and desires tries to amalgamate incorrect views with correct ones, the result of which is that his life becomes an embodiment of contradiction. If a person keeps analyzing his views, does not allow his critical ability to die away and in pursuance of whims and desires does not amalgamate evil with the truth, he can remain shielded from the trials of Satan – but few people can do this.

اَفَلَمۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡۤا اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَوۡقَهُمۡ كَيۡفَ بَنَيۡنٰهَا وَزَيَّنّٰهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنۡ فُرُوۡجٍ ۝٦ وَالۡاَرۡضَ مَدَدۡنٰهَا وَاَلۡقَيۡنَا فِيۡهَا رَوَاسِیَ وَاَنۡۢبَتۡنَا فِيۡهَا مِنۡ كُلِّ زَوۡجٍۢ بَهِيۡجٍ ۝٧ تَبۡصِرَةً وَّذِكۡرٰى لِكُلِّ عَبۡدٍ مُّنِيۡبٍ ۝٨[7]

In these verses, the Almighty has directed the attention of the rejecters of the Day of Judgement to His obvious signs of power, providence and wisdom which are evident everywhere, and are enough to remind and create awareness in every person who has

6. See, for example: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 2, 365.

7. Have they not observed the sky above them? How We have fashioned and adorned it, and it has no fissure in it. And We spread the earth and set upon it mountains, and brought forth in it all kinds of beautiful things for the insight and reminder for every heedful person.

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a heart vibrant for the truth.

First and foremost, attention is directed to His great power and wisdom: have they not seen how the Almighty has raised high the heavens over their heads and decked it with stars; it is a miracle of God's power and wisdom that they do not see any fissure in this extensively laid out roof. The implication is that how can recreation be difficult for someone whose majesty of power and wisdom they see above their heads?

After this, besides His power and wisdom, attention is directed to the signs of His providence and sustenance. They are asked to observe the earth below their feet – how it has been spread out below them and in order to maintain the balance of the earth has nailed mountains into it and has caused to grow a variety of vegetation which becomes a source of sustenance for human beings and the sight of which is a treat to their eyes. The implication is that how can recreation be difficult for someone whose majesties of power, wisdom and providence they are witnessing? Will the Lord Who has made such arrangements for their nourishment leave them to eat, live and be merry without calling them to account.

The verse تَبۡصِرَةً وَّ ذِكۡرٰى لِكُلِّ عَبۡدٍ مُّنِيۡبٍ implies that the Almighty has made evident in the heavens and the earth His signs of power, wisdom and providence so that they can remind and enlighten those who take heed. The word تَبۡصِرَةً means to create insight so that they are able to go past the external form and see what is beneath it, while the word ذِكۡرٰى means to bring someone out from his state of apathy and indifference. The implication is that the Almighty has filled every nook and corner of this universe with miracles and signs which are enough to open eyes and jolt and awaken hearts; however, these miracles can only be effective for those who are ready to accept their influence. For people who by becoming slaves to the material world have lost this subtle sense in them, this universe is a place of pitch darkness. Here readers may refresh in their minds what I have referred to in this exegesis many a time: this world did not require for its existence and sustenance the diversity, variety and tint which is evident from every nook and corner of it. However, the reason because of which the Almighty has generously shown these majesties in this world is that the subtle sense which is awakened by power, wisdom, beauty and munificence is awakened and a person learns and understands the lesson of wisdom writ large on every leaf of this orchard; however, for this it is essential that a person use the ability of being reminded which the Almighty has innately blessed him with. If a person does not use this ability, then the Almighty does not care about such thick-headed animals. If He has blessed a person with the freedom of will, then this necessitates that a person value and honour the comprehension he has been given and move forward under its direction. If he does so, he is blessed with more light from God, otherwise whatever had been given to him is confiscated because of this ungrateful attitude.

Other verses of the Qur'ān also state what is mentioned in these verses. For assurance and satisfaction of hearts, some verses are cited below.

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In Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, people who regarded being created a second time as improbable are addressed thus:

اَوَلَمۡ یَرَوۡا اَنَّ اللّٰہَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰۤی اَنۡ یَّخۡلُقَ مِثۡلَہُمۡ (۹۹:۱۷)

Do they not see that the God Who has created the heavens and the earth has power to create their like? (17:99)

This very doubt of the rejecters of the Hereafter is answered in Sūrah a;-Nāzi'āt in the following words:

ءَاَنۡتُمۡ اَشَدُّ خَلۡقًا اَمِ السَّمَآءُ ؕ بَنٰىہَا.رَفَعَ سَمۡکَہَا فَسَوّٰىہَا.وَ اَغۡطَشَ لَیۡلَہَا وَ اَخۡرَجَ ضُحٰىہَا.وَ الۡاَرۡضَ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِکَ دَحٰىہَا.اَخۡرَجَ مِنۡہَا مَآءَہَا وَ مَرۡعٰىہَا.وَالۡجِبَالَ اَرۡسٰىہَا.مَتَاعًا لَّکُمۡ وَ لِاَنۡعَامِکُمۡ. (۷۹: ۲۷-۳۳)

Is it more difficult to create you or the sky? He made it and raised high its roof; then perfected it, covered its night and uncovered its day, and after that spread out the earth, and He brought forth from it, its water and its fodder, and set firm mountains over it as a means of sustenance for you and your cattle. (79:27-33)

A deliberation on these verses will show that they contain all the aspects of power, greatness, wisdom and providence more extensively as found in the under discussion verses of Sūrah Qāf which are used as bases to adduce the bringing about of the Day of Judgement, its need and it being a requisite of God's attributes

وَ نَزَّلۡنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً مُّبٰرَکًا فَاَنۡۢبَتۡنَا بِہٖ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ حَبَّ الۡحَصِیۡدِ ۙ﴿۹﴾ وَ النَّخۡلَ بٰسِقٰتٍ لَّہَا طَلۡعٌ نَّضِیۡدٌ ۙ﴿۱۰﴾ رِّزۡقًا لِّلۡعِبَادِ ۙ وَ اَحۡیَیۡنَا بِہٖ بَلۡدَۃً مَّیۡتًا ؕ کَذٰلِکَ الۡخُرُوۡجُ ﴿۱۱﴾[8]

These verses direct attention towards the signs of the heavens and the earth from another aspect evident from which is an argument in favour of *tawḥīd* since there is found great harmony between the two. The elements of providence found in them necessitate reward and punishment and the way rain enlivens a barren piece of land also brings the scenario of life after death before a person.

The expression مَآءً مُّبٰرَکًا refers to rain which is a means of lushness and luxuriance. At times, rain causes havoc and destruction instead of luxuriance and it assumes the form of punishment for nations. Here the attribute مُبٰرَکً (blessed) dispels this doubt.

The expression حَبَّ الۡحَصِیۡدِ refers to crops which are harvested and which are stocked

8. And We sent down blessed water from the skies with which We thence brought forth gardens and the harvest grain and tall palm trees stacked with clusters of dates, as a means of sustenance for men. And thereby We enlivened a dead piece of land. Likewise, after death shall you rise from the earth.

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like wheat etc. The reason that حَبَّ الْحَصِيْدِ is mentioned besides orchards is to direct attention to the elaborate arrangement of providence made by the Almighty for His servants: He created for them fresh and delicious fruit in orchards and nutritional crops which can be stored once they are harvested and can be benefited from continuously.

Consider now the next verse: وَالنَّخْلَ بٰسِقٰتٍ لَّهَا طَلْعٌ نَّضِيْدٌ. Apparently, there was no need to mention النَّخْلَ after جَنّٰتٍ; however, the reason that a specific category has been mentioned after the general one is that this was a special grain found in Arabia which was the best fruit for them and also a means of fulfilling their nutritional needs. Reference to the height of the date palms and to the clusters of dates is to awaken the sense of observation and the feeling of gratitude in the addressees so that they see these signs of providence and be moved the way sensitive and vibrant hearts are.

Consider the expression رِّزْقًا لِّلْعِبَادِ. The layered clusters of dates bear witness from their very form that the Creator has so copiously used His power, wisdom and creativity so that His servants are able to benefit from these clusters, observe His wisdom and providence in them and recognize the obligation they owe to these favours: they shall one day be questioned about them.

The meaning conveyed by the words وَاَحْيَيْنَا بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ الْخُرُوْجُ is the central theme of the *sūrah*. Among the benefits and blessings of rain which they are witnessing is also the fact that dead and barren pieces of land which do not have any life at any place are enlivened and rejuvenated with just one burst of rain. Rising of the dead should be regarded analogous to this with which they are being informed of; however, they regard it to be impossible.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ وَّاَصْحٰبُ الرَّسِّ وَ ثَمُوْدُ ﴿١٢﴾ وَعَادٌ وَّ فِرْعَوْنُ وَ اِخْوَانُ لُوْطٍ ﴿١٣﴾ وَّاَصْحٰبُ الْاَيْكَةِ وَ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ؕ كُلٌّ كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ وَعِيْدِ ﴿١٤﴾[9]

This is a warning to the Quraysh that before them the people of Noah (sws) the dwellers of the al-Rass valley, the Thamūd, the ‘Ād, the Pharaoh, the brethren of Lot, the companions of the Wood and the people of Tubb‘a also denied after the Almighty had made the truth conclusively evident to them. At last, the fate of rejection which they had been warned of appeared before them. In a similar manner, these Quraysh have also become persistent on rejection; so, the punishment they are being warned of will definitely visit them and no power in the heavens and the earth will be able to save them from God's grasp. This is a reference to the practice of God which necessarily comes into play once the truth is conclusively conveyed – a practice to which we have been continuously alluding to in this exegesis.

9. Before them the people of Noah and the dwellers of the al-Rass valley, the Thamūd, the ‘Ād, the Pharaoh, the brethren of Lot, the companions of al-Aykah and the people of Tubb‘a also denied. All of them denied the messengers. So, Our punishment descended upon them.

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This warning has been referred to in verse 5 earlier. However, after referring towards it, the direction of the discourse changed to arguments which substantiate the Hereafter. After furnishing these arguments, this passing reference is elaborated upon: if these people are audacious enough to reject the Hereafter, they should just observe the devastating fate of previous nations who denied their respective messengers.

The nations which are mentioned here have already been mentioned in previous *sūrahs* from various aspects, I have tried to explain their historical status wherever needed. The companions of al-Rass have been mentioned in verse 38 of Sūrah al-Furqān. While explaining this verse, I have cited the opinions of various exegetes and also stated my preference. Though nations are not cited here in chronological sequence, yet the mention of the companions of al-Rass right after the people of Noah (sws) shows that they belonged to the ancient nations of Arabia most of whose history has been obliterated.

The words كُلٌّ كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ show that the companions of al-Rass denied the messenger sent to it. As a result, the punishment of God visited them and destroyed them. A narrative recorded in exegetical works says that these people had buried their messenger in a well.[10] The word *rass* means a well and thus these people came to be known as the companions of al-Rass. However, this report does not seem to be true. There is no authentic information regarding a messenger being killed by his nation. Even if the word *rass* means a well, it is not necessary for this incident to be true for these people being ascribed to al-Rass.

The reason that the nation of the Pharaoh is not mentioned with the Pharaoh is that it was the Pharaoh who was the real culprit. In Sūrah Ṭāha, the words are: وَ اَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهٗ وَ مَا هَدٰی (۷۹:۲۰) (for Pharaoh misled his people: he did not guide them, (20:79)) and in Sūrah al-Nāzi'āt the words are: اِذْهَبْ اِلٰی فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰی (۱۷:۷۹) (go you to the Pharaoh; he has transgressed all bounds, (79:17))

The nation of Tubba' are mentioned in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Dukhān.

اَفَعَیِیْنَا بِالْخَلْقِ الْاَوَّلِ ؕ بَلْ هُمْ فِیْ لَبْسٍ مِّنْ خَلْقٍ جَدِیْدٍ ﴿۱۵﴾[11]

In verses 6-11 earlier, the Almighty has emphatically directed attention to His power and wisdom which can be seen in every nook and corner of this universe and the purpose, as is pointed out above, was to persuade people who would regard recreation after death to be an improbable phenomenon. A question is posed before these people: do not such people see the heavens and the earth created by God; was He unable to create them the first time. The expression عَیِیْ بِالْاَمْرِ is explained by

10. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 2, 319. (*Translator*)

11. Were We not able to create the first time? In fact, these people are in doubt about being created a second time.

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lexicographers as إِذَا لَمْ يَهْتَدِ لِوَجْهِ عَمَلِهِ.[12] This means that a person is powerless to do something and he is unable to understand how to undertake a task.

The words بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ لَبْسٍ مِّنْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ signify the fact that though these people cannot dare say that the Almighty was powerless in creating the heavens and the earth the first time; they acknowledge that God is their creator; however, they are doubtful whether He can create them again. In my opinion, this verse has a sarcastic ring in it. In other words, when they can see from their very eyes that creating them the first time was not at all a bother for God, how can it be a bother to recreate them. These naïve people should be asked that whether creating the first time is difficult or the second. If an artist can draw an illustration the second time better than the first, why cannot God create more easily the second time?

Section II: (Verses 16-35)

In the succeeding verses, first the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty in recording the deeds and words of a person is mentioned. After that, the advent of the Day of Judgement and bringing forth of the criminals is portrayed. Further ahead, casting of these criminals into Hell and their mutual condemnation and cursing is depicted. After that, details of the blessings and favours of God which will be bestowed by Him on the righteous is mentioned.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهٖ نَفْسُهٗ ۚ وَنَحْنُ اَقْرَبُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيْدِ ﴿١٦﴾ اِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيٰنِ عَنِ
الْيَمِيْنِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيْدٌ ﴿١٧﴾ مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ اِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيْبٌ عَتِيْدٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَجَآءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ ذٰلِكَ مَا
كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيْدُ ﴿١٩﴾ وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْوَعِيْدِ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَجَآءَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّعَهَا سَآئِقٌ وَّشَهِيْدٌ ﴿٢١﴾ لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِيْ
غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَآءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيْدٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَقَالَ قَرِيْنُهٗ هٰذَا مَا لَدَيَّ عَتِيْدٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ اَلْقِيَا فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ
كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ عَنِيْدٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ مُّرِيْبِ ﴿٢٥﴾ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَاَلْقِيٰهُ فِي الْعَذَابِ الشَّدِيْدِ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ
قَرِيْنُهٗ رَبَّنَا مَآ اَطْغَيْتُهٗ وَلٰكِنْ كَانَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ لَا تَخْتَصِمُوْا لَدَيَّ وَقَدْ قَدَّمْتُ اِلَيْكُمْ بِالْوَعِيْدِ ﴿٢٨﴾ مَا يُبَدَّلُ
الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ وَمَآ اَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ﴿٢٩﴾ يَوْمَ نَقُوْلُ لِجَهَنَّمَ هَلِ امْتَلَاْتِ وَتَقُوْلُ هَلْ مِنْ مَّزِيْدٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَاُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ
لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ غَيْرَ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٣١﴾ هٰذَا مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لِكُلِّ اَوَّابٍ حَفِيْظٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَجَآءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُّنِيْبِ ﴿٣٣﴾
ادْخُلُوْهَا بِسَلٰمٍ ۭ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُلُوْدِ ﴿٣٤﴾ لَهُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُوْنَ فِيْهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيْدٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

12. See, for example: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 15, 111-112.

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And We created man and We know the thoughts that arise in his heart, and We are closer to him than his life vein. (16)

Beware of the two collectors who collect – one seated on the right and the other on the left. Not a word he utters but there is by him a vigilant guardian. (17-18)

And the agony of death arrived with the certain reality. This is what you had been avoiding. And the trumpet shall be sounded. That day shall be the day on which Our warning will materialize. And every soul shall come forth with one who drives him on and another who bears witness. You remained heedless of this day. So, We have removed your veil. Then sharp is your eyesight today. And his companion will say: The one who was in my custody is present here. Cast into Hell every ungrateful person, every enemy, forbidder of good and every doubting transgressor who has set up another deity besides God. So, hurl him into a severe torture. (19-26)

His companion Satan will say: "O Lord! I did not make him rebellious; in fact, he himself had gone far astray." It will be ordained: "Dispute not in My presence now; I had warned you before hand. My Word does not change and I do not the least injustice to my servants." (27-29)

Remember the day when We will ask Hell: Have you been filled?" And she will answer: "Are there any more?!" And Paradise shall be brought close to the righteous, though it shall not be far away. It will be said: This is what had been promised to you for every person who turned to God and had heeded the limits set by God, who had feared the Merciful God, though he had not seen Him, and has come with a heart inclined. Enter this Paradise in peace. This is the eternal day. They will get whatever they will wish for and We have for them even more than this. (30-35)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهٖ نَفْسُهٗ ۚ وَنَحْنُ اَقْرَبُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيْدِ ﴿١٦﴾[13]

Just as the naïve are inflicted with doubt regarding the Day of Judgement that how is it possible for someone to recreate human beings once they die and their bodies decay into dust, quite similarly, many are also inflicted with the doubt that who can keep record of all the open and hidden words and deeds of a person so that one day he holds each person responsible and reward or punish him. Both these doubts are two sides of the same coin. For this reason, in verse 4 earlier both are briefly answered. Later, the first one is refuted in detail. Now in this verse the second one is taken up and arguments are presented to answer it. The verse says that it is God Who has created man and even what comes in his heart is also known to God, let alone his words and deeds. In other words, when God is the Creator and He alone has created

13. And We created man and We know the thoughts that arise in his heart, and We are closer to him than his life vein.

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man and given him a physical form, it is essential that God be aware of each of his body parts and their functions. To draw attention to this very reality, the words used in Sūrah al-Mulk are: اَلَا يَعۡلَمُ مَنۡ خَلَقَ (۶۷:۱۴) (would He not know Who has created? (67:14)). If a Creator is not aware of all the minute details of His creatures, how can He make arrangements for their protection and sustenance?

The word وَرِيۡدٌ refers to "life vein." This is a very common Arabic idiom which is used to express extreme nearness. The implication is that no one should be misled by the fact that if he is not seeing God, then God is also not able to see him. He is closer to every person than his life-vein. His knowledge and His power embraces every individual from every aspect and both his hidden and apparent are before Him all the time.

اِذۡ يَتَلَقَّى الۡمُتَلَقِّيٰنِ عَنِ الۡيَمِيۡنِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيۡدٌ ﴿۱۷﴾ مَا يَلۡفِظُ مِنۡ قَوۡلٍ اِلَّا لَدَيۡهِ رَقِيۡبٌ عَتِيۡدٌ ﴿۱۸﴾[14]

The expression عَنِ الۡيَمِيۡنِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيۡدٌ with its suppressions revealed is thus: عَنِ الۡيَمِيۡنِ قَعِيۡدٌ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيۡدٌ (one sitting on the right and one on the left). This suppression is because of customary brevity of Arabic. Examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

These verses mention a further arrangement made by the Almighty to preserve the record of words and deeds of people. In the first place, God is Himself full aware of what frequents in the hearts. Moreover, for the purpose of conclusive communication of the truth, He has deputed two angels each on a person, one of whom sits on this right and the other on his left. A vigilant sentinel is there to note down each and very word he utters.

Though recording of deeds is not mentioned in words, it has to be considered as understood on the principle of mentioning dominant elements and suppressing secondary ones. This is because if there is an arrangement to note down each and every word uttered by the tongue, then the arrangement to note down deeds done by the hand and foot is even more likely to have been made. It is evident from narratives that there is division of labour between these two angels. The angel on the right keeps record of a person's good deeds and words while the one on the left keeps record of a person's bad deeds and words. Since in the issue of testimony, the evidence of two witnesses is considered reliable in religion, the Almighty has deputed two angels each on a person.

It is also evident from this verse that the thoughts of a person are not accessible to these angels. It is only God Who has knowledge of the unseen and it is His attribute of hiding faults of His creatures that the thoughts of the hearts are only known to Him.

Besides this arrangement, the Almighty has made another arrangement for the conclusive communication of the truth: the hands, feet, ears and eyes of a person will also bear witness before the Almighty. Whatever we are uttering is being preserved by

14. Beware of the two collectors who collect – one seated on the right and the other on the left. Not a word he utters but there is by him a vigilant guardian.

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our ears and whatever we see is being recorded by our eyes. Similar is the case with other limbs. Whatever we do or say we do before the divine guards through limbs blessed by God. So how great is this foolish notion that how can God know each and every word and deed of each and every person so that He may call him to account.

In the expression اِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيٰنِ a verb is suppressed before اِذْ as per common linguistic principles of Arabic. Here since indifferent elements are being reminded of about a reality, the suppressed verb would be one which is instrumental in warning the addressees. Thus for example, it could be: "Remember" or "Keep in mind." I have translated the verse keeping this in view. Al-Zamakhsharī has adopted another view;[15] however, I do not find myself in agreement with it.

وَجَآءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ ذٰلِكَ مَا كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيْدُ ﴿١٩﴾[16]

The word حَقٌّ refers to the Day of Judgement which the Qur'ān is informing them about and whose denial is mentioned in the previous verse. Since it is a certain and incontestable reality, the word حَقٌّ is used for it. The past tense used is to express its certainty. The implication is that people should not regard it to be far off; it is at hand. The time left for life is the very time left for the Hereafter to arrive. As soon as the unconsciousness of death comes, the Hereafter will come. This situation will tell them that the very thing they tried to evade has appeared.

It is to this very aspect of the Hereafter which certain narratives point. One of them says: مَنْ مَاتَ فَقَدْ قَامَتْ قِيَامَتُه (he who died his Day of Judgement has come).[17] The reason for this is that the life of Barzakh after death is just a prelude to the Hereafter. It is with death that the circumstances of the Hereafter begin. The trueness of faith and its fate is borne witness to and the evil fate that the disbelievers will meet commences at this instance – the very fate they used to deny in the previous world. No possibility of doubt remains after this for anyone.

The words ذٰلِكَ مَا كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيْدُ can be an expression of the situation and they can also be a verbal expression. In other words, at that time they will see what they had been denying has come upon them at last. The verb حَادَ يَحِيْدُ means to walk evading the path. This is a very apt depiction of the attitude regarding the Hereafter of these people who follow their desires. If they lead a life while evading the Hereafter, it is not because arguments which are in its favour are not known to them for its signs are found at every step but people who do not want to tread the right path walk while evading

15. See: Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhasharī, *Al-Kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl.* vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, n.d.), 387.

16. And the agony of death arrived with the certain reality. This is what you had been avoiding.

17. Al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 12, 163.

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them; however, what will they do when it stares them in the eyes.

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْوَعِيْدِ ﴿٢٠﴾[18]

After this, the only phase which remains is that of sounding the trumpet. It shall be sounded and the Day will arrive which they are being threatened with. This too because of its certainty has been expressed in the past tense so that it can be picturized before the eyes. The implied meaning is that people should not be misled by the fact that life, then death, then *barzakh* and resurrection are far off. As soon as the trumpet is sounded, they will think that the period they thought as long has passed in the blink of an eye.

وَجَاۗءَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّعَهَا سَاۗىِٕقٌ وَّشَهِيْدٌ ﴿٢١﴾[19]

This verse refers to the next phase after the trumpet is sounded: on that Day, every soul will be brought forth before God such that one angel will be deputed to drive him from behind and another will be deputed on him as a witness to the record of his deeds. This is the meaning evident from the verse and our early scholars too have interpreted it thus. Some people have regarded one and the same angel to be implied as the beckoner and as the witness: it is he who will drive the soul and it is he who will bear witness. Some others regard the one who drives forth as an angel and regard the soul and its deeds to be the witness. Both these views in my opinion are weak. The first of these is not supported by linguistic principles and the second has an element of artificiality in it – something which the words of the verse are forsaking.

Some others have regarded these two angels to be the same two which were referred to in the previous verse; however, this view too is untenable. Both these angels, as is evident from the verse, are deputed to keep a record of his words and deeds. If both of them are required to bring forth a soul in the court of God, then both should have the same status: both should be presented as witnesses. There is no plausible reason that if both were deputed for the same purpose, then why should the status of one of them change? Nevertheless, none of these views is without flaw. What is evident from the words of the verse is what I have alluded to earlier: after the trumpet is sounded every soul will be brought before God such that one angel will be driving it forward from behind and another will be in front of him having the record of his words and deeds and will act as a witness.

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18. And the trumpet shall be sounded. That day shall be the day on which Our warning will materialize.

19. And every soul shall come forth with one who drives him on and another who bears witness.

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لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِيْ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَآءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيْدٌ ﴿٢٢﴾[20]

At that time, the Almighty will inform them that they were totally indifferent to this Day and that now the veil stretched across their eyes has been removed by Him.

The words فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيْدٌ (so, sharp is your eyesight today) are meant to humiliate and mock them: today their eyes are very sharp! The possibility of the event they could not see at all has now come before them with all its minute details.

This verse does not contradict the verse which says that those who deny the signs of God will be raised up blind on the Day of Judgement. I have already explained the context and occasion of both.

وَقَالَ قَرِيْنُهٗ هٰذَا مَا لَدَيَّ عَتِيْدٌ ﴿٢٣﴾[21]

The word قَرِيْن refers to either the driver or the witness which will bring him forth before the presence of God. Some people are of the view that this refers to the satan which is deputed on every person who shows indifference to God; however, this view does not seem to be correct. Neither will this satan be in a position to say that what is in his custody is now present nor will he on that day take responsibility of leading away someone. In the succeeding verses, it is mentioned that when people will blame him for their error, he will openly acquit himself of this: قَالَ قَرِيْنُهٗ رَبَّنَا مَآ اَطْغَيْتُهٗ وَلٰكِنْ كَانَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ بَعِيْدٍ (٢٧) (His companion Satan will say: "O Lord! I did not make him rebellious; in fact, he himself had gone far astray," (27)). For this reason, I am of the opinion that it refers to one of the two alluded to earlier. It is however difficult to give a definite answer as to which among the two is referred to. Either of the two can be referred to because either of them can utter the words: he who was in my custody is present. Thus, exegetes have differed in this.[22] I am inclined to believe that these words will be uttered by the one who drives on a person. The reason is that the criminal will primarily be in his custody and he will be responsible of bringing him forth to the court of God. Thus when he will enter this court, he will utter these words the way a dutiful sentinel does after discharging his duty.

اَلْقِيَا فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ عَنِيْدٍ ﴿٢٤﴾[23]

The word اَلْقِيَا is a dual. The question therefore arises that which two angels will be ordered thus. Exegetes have generally understood it to refer to the two angels mentioned earlier:[24] the one who drives on and the witness. They will be directed to

20. You remained heedless of this day. So, We have removed your veil. Then sharp is your eyesight today.

21. And his companion will say: The one who was in my custody is present here.

22. See, for example: al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 26, 164-166. (*Translator*)

23. Cast into Hell every ungrateful person, every enemy.

24. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 227. (*Translator*)

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fling every ingrate and rival person into Hell. The view seems tenable. Directing them does not necessitate they themselves will cast him into Hell. This is only a statement of the command. In compliance to it, they will hand over the criminal to the angels who will be entrusted with this task. These angels will then cast them into that section of Hell which will be reserved for such criminals.

About the employment of the dual verb, al-Zamakhsharī[25] has also cited the view of the famous literary luminary al-Mubarrad that Arabs at times use the dual verb merely to imply repetition of the verb. Thus, for example, Imru' al-Qays says: قفا نبك من ذكرى حبيب و منزل.[26] Generally, people have translated it thus: "Wait both you friends of mine; let us shed a few tears in remembrance of my beloved and the place where she resided." In the light of this opinion expressed by al-Mubarrad, the word قفا would mean: "Wait! Wait! …" And there is no need to suppose two addressees. Similarly, in his opinion, the word أَلْقِيَا of the verse under discussion would mean: "Throw! Throw!" The purpose is to express anger and wrath to emphasize the directive regardless of the fact that the directive is given to two angels or to more than two. It may be kept in mind that this very directive is given in the plural in Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah: خُذُوْهُ فَغُلُّوْهُ. ثُمَّ الْجَحِيْمَ صَلُّوْهُ. ثُمَّ فِيْ سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُوْنَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوْهُ. (٦٩: ٣٠-٣٢) (seize him, then chain him by the neck; then into Hell cast him; then with a chain whose measure in yards is seventy bind him, (69:30-32)). I have cited Mubarrad's view so that readers can find food for thought for further research and deliberation. However, I myself am not fully convinced of it. Nevertheless, if research furnishes satisfactory examples of this usage, it can be helpful in solving certain complex problems. As far as the circumstances of the Hereafter are concerned, a believer should profess belief in the apparent meanings of the Qur'ān and should not go after the details.

Consider next the expression of the verse: كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ عَنِيْدٍ. The word كَفَّارٍ means "ingrate" and "denier of the truth." The word عَنِيْد means "enemy" and "rival." The word كفر (*kufr*) primarily is used for showing ungratefulness to God and rejection of His rights. For an upright person, there can be no dispute or debate regarding the rights of God. Such a person is not merely a كافر (*kāfir*); he is a كفار (*kaffār*) and to top this, he is also a foe and an opponent to these rights so that others too should fulfill them.

مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ مُّرِيْبِ ﴿٢٥﴾ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَاَلْقِيٰهُ فِي الْعَذَابِ الشَّدِيْدِ ﴿٢٦﴾[27]

Those who deny God's rights and show animosity to them will also be ones who are very stingy in fulfilling the rights of their fellow human beings and would be those who stop others from fulfilling these rights. Besides this, they will also be those who

25. Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāff*, vol. 4, 390.

26. Imru'u al-Qays, *Dīwān*, 1. .

27. Forbidder of good and every doubting transgressor who has set up another deity besides God. So, hurl him into a severe torture.

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transgress limits and usurp rights. Though the word خَيْر is used for all types of virtuous acts; however, it is very common for the virtue of charity with relation to human beings. The word مَّنَّاعٍ encompasses the meanings of both to stop one's self and to stop others. Those who are stingy are not content to remain stingy; they try to make others stingy also so that the secret of their own stinginess is not revealed. Moreover, such people are also مُعْتَدٍ (transgressors of bounds). These people are not content to merely not discharging their obligations to others; they want to transgress bounds and take way or try to take away what others have and they have in it in their possession. The word مُّرِيْب means a person who is inflicted with doubts. Though this word has a general connotation and includes doubts about monotheism and the Hereafter, yet in the Qur'ān, it is generally used for the doubt a person may have about the Day of Judgement – which is the very topic of this *sūrah*. Here this attribute is mentioned as the primary attribute among all others which are mentioned earlier. It is the doubt regarding the Day of Judgement which makes a person ungrateful, rival, stingy and transgressor of bounds. Thus after mentioning all the maladies, the real malady which is the source of all the others is mentioned.

The words الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ at the end with a change in style very emphatically mention polytheism. It is something which totally ravages religion and morality and is the root of spreading anarchy in the society. If someone who subscribes to it also believes in the Hereafter, then believing in it or not is equal. If a person is inflicted with the doubt that whether such and such a being is God's partner or such a beloved one can convince God on whatever he wants to, then for him the coming or not coming of the Day of Judgement is the same. In his own right, he can do whatever he likes after pleasing Him. Who can stop him from doing so?

Here the principle of Arabic should remain in consideration which I have been explaining at various places of this exegesis: when attributes are mentioned without the particle of conjugation, then it means that all the attributes are simultaneously present in the noun they qualify. Another point that needs to be considered regarding these attributes is that the sequence of their mention progresses from corollaries to principles. They begin with ingratitude and stinginess and end with rejection of the Hereafter and polytheism. It is evident from this that if a person has doubts about the Day of Judgement and is also incriminated with polytheism, then his character will be the one mentioned in these verses.

The اَلْقِيَا in فَاَلْقِيٰهُ فِى الْعَذَابِ الشَّدِيْدِ emphasizes the اَلْقِيَا of the earlier verse. It was stated earlier that the criminal should be thrown into Hell. After that a mention was made of his attributes and then emphatically repeated that he should be thrown into the severe torment of Hell. At another place, the Qur'ān has said that Hell has seven gates and many sections. It will be directed that people of the afore-mentioned attributes be cast into severe torment.

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قَالَ قَرِيْنُهٗ رَبَّنَا مَآ اَطْغَيْتُهٗ وَلٰكِنْ كَانَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ لَا تَخْتَصِمُوْا لَدَيَّ وَقَدْ قَدَّمْتُ اِلَيْكُمْ بِالْوَعِيْدِ ﴿٢٨﴾[28]

Mentioned in these verses is the situation which will arise after the criminals enter Hell: every inhabitant of Hell will blame Satan for his error and misguidance – the Satan who, as per the established practice of God, is deputed on every person who shows indifference to the remembrance of God. When Satan will see that people are trying to incriminate him, he will try to emphatically absolve himself: رَبَّنَا مَآ اَطْغَيْتُهٗ وَلٰكِنْ كَانَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ (O Lord! I did not make him rebellious; in fact, he himself had gone far astray). This statement of Satan does not mean that he will refute his act of calling people towards error. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān that he will confess calling people to error and misguidance; however, it is the person who himself was responsible for accepting it and that he did not compel him in this regard. At another place, the words used are:

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُّكُمْ فَاَخْلَفْتُكُمْ ۭ وَمَا كَانَ لِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطٰنٍ اِلَّآ اَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِيْ ۚ فَلَا تَلُوْمُوْنِيْ وَلُوْمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۭ مَآ اَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ. (١٤:٢٢)

And when the matter has been settled, Satan will say to them: "True was the promise which God made you and He fulfilled it. And I made false promises with you and so I did not keep it. And I had no power over you. I only called you, and you responded to my call. So do not now blame me, but blame yourselves. Now I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I never believed, as you did, that I was god's equal." (14:22)

The expression وَلٰكِنْ كَانَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ refers to the fact that he had gone so far astray that there was no chance for him to return to the truth. It should remain in consideration that people who greatly distance themselves from the truth end up losing the urge to ask for guidance and Satan gets the better of them. It is as if these words express from Satan the reason of this person being caught in his web: because of his desire to deviate from the truth he had become worthy of this as per the practice of God.

It also needs to be kept in mind that just as Satan will absolve himself from responsibility to his followers on the Day of Judgement, in a similar manner leaders who led people astray will absolve themselves from their responsibility. This has been mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān. Following is an example from Sūrah Ibrāhīm:

وَبَرَزُوْا لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفٰٓؤُا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّغْنُوْنَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ

28. His companion Satan will say: "O Lord! I did not make him rebellious; in fact, he himself had gone far astray." It will be ordained: "Dispute not in My presence now; I had warned you before hand.

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شَيْءٍ ۭ قَالُوْا لَوْ هَدٰىنَا اللّٰهُ لَهَدَيْنٰكُمْ ۭ سَوَاۗءٌ عَلَيْنَآ اَجَزِعْنَآ اَمْ صَبَرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَّحِيْصٍ. (١٤:٢١)

And all shall appear before God. So the weak will say to those who thought themselves mighty: "We were your followers. Can you protect us from God's punishment?" They will reply: "Had God given us guidance, we would have guided you. It is equal whether we panic or show patience. There is no escape for us." (14:21)

The verse قَالَ لَا تَخْتَصِمُوْا لَدَيَّ وَ قَدْ قَدَّمْتُ اِلَيْكُمْ بِالْوَعِيْدِ says that on this argument and row between the two, the Almighty will comment that there is no use fighting in His presence. This blame-game cannot absolve anyone of his responsibility. The Almighty had already informed everyone of His threat; for this reason, the truth has been conclusively conveyed and no one is left with any excuse to deny it.

The threat refers to the one which the Almighty informed mankind right after Satan had challenged Him that if given respite he will lead the majority of Adam's progeny astray. In response to this, the Almighty had told him to lead astray whoever he can and that He would also like to inform him that those follow him whether from among the jinn or men, He will cast them into Hell including him.

After this threat, the Almighty kept on sending His prophets and messengers who at various intervals continued to inform people of God's guidance and of the fate met by those led astray by following Satan and his progeny. After this, these people have been left with no excuse to deny the truth. Whatever fate they will meet will be their own doing.

مَا يُبَدَّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ وَمَآ اَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ﴿٢٩﴾[29]

The verse emphasizes and explains what is said earlier: what the Almighty has conveyed from the very beginning cannot be changed as a result of this blame-game and of this complaining. The promises and threats of God are absolutely certain and unassailable. They are reaping only what they had sown. So they should now taste it – for the Almighty does not oppress His creatures even to the minutest degree.

The linguistic principle used in وَمَآ اَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ has been explained at more than once place in this exegesis: when an exaggerated statement is expressed in the negative, then the purpose is to exaggerate the negation. Thus the correct meaning of this verse would be: I am not the slightest unjust to My servants. Since our exegetes are generally not aware of this style, they interpret it to mean (He is not unjust). Most translators follow this interpretation while translating the verse even though this is a case of blatant indifference to the words of the Qur'ān. What needs to be deliberated upon is that if the purpose was to say that God is not unjust to His servants, why was the simple linguistic

29. My Word does not change and I do not the least injustice to my servants."

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style abandoned in favour of وَمَآ اَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ? Every word and every style of the Qur'ān occupies a specific status without understanding which the verse cannot be correctly interpreted.

Examples of this style are found in classical Arabic literature. Amongst the poets of the *jāhilliyah* period the expressions اَلْمَرْءُ لَيْسَ بِقَتَّالٍ[30] and اَلْمَرْءُ لَيْسَ بِفَعَّالٍ[31] are found in the poetry of Imru' al-Qays. His rival had threatened to wage war against him and to kill him. In response, while making fun of him, Imru' al-Qays had declared that he is threatening him while this coward has no grit to fight and kill. The words لَيْسَ بِفَعَّالٍ imply that he does not have the courage do to do anything. Other classical poets have also used such expressions; however, alas at this moment I do not have their poetical collections with me. Yet, whatever I have written, I am fully convinced of it.

What is stated in this verse is also mentioned in the Qur'ān in a different style. For example, the words in Sūrah al-Nisā' are:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ. (٤٠:٤)

God is not the slightest bit unjust. (4:40)

In Sūrah Yūnus, it is said:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا. (٤٤:١٠)

God is not the slightest bit unjust to people. (10:44)

If someone is doubtful of the principle of exaggeration in negation I have stated above, it does not matter. For proof of the veracity of my interpretation this much is enough even if this principle is found in part in Arabic. In the presence of this principle, it must be realized that all leading authorities acknowledge the fact that if there is a possibility of two interpretations of a verse, that interpretation will be preferred which is more congenial and in harmony with the Qur'ān. There are many factors which support my interpretation.

– it is in accordance with the linguistic principles of Arabic.

– it is befittingly in accordance with the attributes of God because He is beyond any semblance of injustice; He will neither be unjust to the righteous nor to the wrongdoers.

– it is corroborated by parallels from the Qur'ān.

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30. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Durayd, *Jamhurah al-lughah*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1426 AH), 49.

31. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Muqri' al-Talmasānī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Undulus al-raṭīb*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1388 AH), 119.

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Amongst our exegesis, only al-Zamakhsharī[32] has dealt with this issue. However, the way he has tried to resolve it does support his Mutizilite stance; but at the same time raises certain other questions which he has not dealt with.

In his view, the meaning of the verse is that if God oppresses His obedient servants, then this will be a great act of oppression and God is not a great oppressor (*ẓallām*).

Many questions arise on this view of al-Zamakhsharī; for the sake of brevity, I will mention only two of them:

Firstly, the verse does not specifically deal with the obedient or the disobedient. The word used is عَبِيْدِ (servants) which is common to all human beings whether they are pious or wicked. For every human being, it is said that God is not unjust to them. Thus this specifying has no sound grounds; in fact, it is against the words of the Qur'ān.

Secondly, if one deliberates on the context of the verse, it will become evident that the Almighty has stated these words by addressing those who had become worthy of Hell: they were told that they are facing a fate they were worthy of; God is not the slightest unjust to His people. This view of al-Zamakhsharī has been presented by some contemporary exegetes in another way: Since if God Who is the creator is unjust to His creation, then this will be a great oppression even though it is against God's majesty to become a great oppressor. For this reason, He has refuted His being *ẓallām*.

It seems that those who have presented the above view do not know that on the basis of this very argument the majority of our scholastics are of the view that no act of God can be called unjust or oppressive: if He casts the righteous into Hell, then this too is an act of justice and if He admits the wrong-doers into Paradise, then this too is an act of justice. A little deliberation will show that this view of the early scholastics in spite of being incorrect is not as incorrect as the view of these new scholastics of this age.

Secondly, these people have not reflected on the fact that if the Almighty has negated injustice and oppression for Himself, then it is through His attributes of justice, mercy and wisdom; He has nowhere negated them by saying that since He is the Creator, hence He cannot be a great oppressor.

Another aspect which has remained elusive to these people is that if this philosophy is considered as correct, then if an act of oppression is from someone other than God then however extreme it may be, he cannot be called *ẓallām* (great oppressor). So much so, the Pharaoh and Hāmān and Nimrod and Shaddād can also not be regarded as great oppressors because they were not the creators and great oppression is only that which is done by the creator. God knows from which school have these people learnt this methodology of reasoning: if the Creator and Sustainer does oppression, then He will be regarded as a great oppressor and if those who are neither the creators nor the sustainers commit oppression, then they will be just oppressors.

Nevertheless whether this needless hair splitting is done by early scholastics and

32. Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāff*, vol. 4, 392.

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exegetes or those of the present age, it is the result of being non-conversant with the style of Arabic I have referred to earlier.

يَوْمَ نَقُوْلُ لِجَهَنَّمَ هَلِ امْتَلَاْتِ وَتَقُوْلُ هَلْ مِنْ مَّزِيْدٍ ﴿٣٠﴾[33]

People should remember the day when the Almighty will ask Hell whether she has been fully filled up or not and she will reply if there is more. This question and answer could be a portrayal of the situation and also a real life matter. Whatever God has created understands His questions and also responds to Him. He is fully capable of giving the power of speech to silent objects. It is mentioned at one instance in the Qur'ān that when the limbs of the criminals will bear witness against them, they while being wonderstruck will ask these limbs why they bore witness against them. Their rejoinder will be: اَنْطَقَنَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ (٤١:٢١) (God, who gives speech to all things, has made us speak, (41:21)).

This question and answer is an expression of God's self-sufficient nature and also of His intense wrath: seeing the inhabitants of Hell fill it will not be any cause of hesitancy for him; He will, in fact, have them thrown without any concern and will then ask Hell if she has been packed to capacity. The implication is that no one should be deceived by the fact that God would be saddened after throwing such a large chunk of people into Hell – people whom He Himself created. Such would be the extent of His wrath that if there would still be more inhabitants to fill Hell, He will make them her fuel.

The rejoinder of Hell: وَتَقُوْلُ هَلْ مِنْ مَّزِيْدٍ can have two aspects: firstly, it will answer in the same furious tone as that of the Almighty: if there are more, I have a lot of capacity; bring them forth; secondly, after seeing the great number of its dwellers it will lose resolve and in this state of frailty it will ask if there are still more to come. Although both these interpretations are linguistically possible, I would prefer the first one. One reason for this preference is that as a result of it there comes into existence complete harmony between the poignant fury of God and the poignant fury of Hell and it is very befitting as well for Hell to comply with God's command with full force and vigour; secondly, at many places in the Qur'ān the vastness of Hell is mentioned in a style that it seems that those people are being warned who reckon that how can such a vast Hell be created which can house such multitudes of people. People may look up what I have written while explaining the following verse: لَهَا سَبْعَةُ اَبْوَابٍ لِكُلِّ بَابٍ مِّنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَّقْسُوْمٌ (١٥:٤٤) (it has seven gates, and through each gate they shall come in separate bands, (15:44)).[34] Thirdly, at some instances in the Qur'ān, Hell is portrayed as seething and fuming with venom when its inmates will be thrown into it. Thus at

33. Remember the day when We will ask Hell: Have you been filled?" And she will answer: "Are there any more?!"

34. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 3, 606-607.

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one place it is said: اِذَآ اُلْقُوْا فِيْهَا سَمِعُوْا لَهَا شَهِيْقًا وَّهِيَ تَفُوْرُ. تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ. (٦٧: ٧-٨) (when they are flung into its flames, they shall hear it roaring and seething, as though bursting with rage, (67:7-8)). Another example can be seen in the following verse:

فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ شَقُوْا فَفِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا زَفِيْرٌ وَّشَهِيْقٌ. (١١:١٠٦)

And as for the damned, they shall be cast into the Fire, where there will be groaning and wailing. (11:106)

وَاُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ غَيْرَ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٣١﴾[35]

After the inhabitants of Hell, now the fate of the inhabitants of Paradise is alluded to: they will be honoured and rewarded such that Paradise will be brought near them as a gift. They will not have to bear the brunt of a journey to travel to it; it will be very near them. The expression غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ is an accusative of state (*hāl*) from the word الْجَنَّةُ. The reason for this usage is that bringing it near should make a person think that it would be brought near from far off and will require some time; the fact of the matter is that it would be already near and to honour the inhabitants of Paradise will be brought further near them. Though the word بَعِيدٍ is technically a masculine noun yet it is not against linguistic principles for it to occur as the accusative of state from a feminine noun. Al-Zamakshari regards this to be technically possible and I agree with his opinion.[36]

هٰذَا مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لِكُلِّ اَوَّابٍ حَفِيْظٍ ﴿٣٢﴾[37]

Once Paradise is brought near these people they will be asked to enter it with these words: this is the reward for these people as promised to them by prophets and messengers of God; it is now being fulfilled. Before the indefinite verb تُوْعَدُوْنَ an incomplete verb is suppressed ie: مَاكُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُوْنَ. This refers to Paradise; however, as per linguistic principles, it means reward and gift in accordance with interpretive rules. Examples of such a style can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*.

The words لِكُلِّ اَوَّابٍ حَفِيْظٍ point to the character of the inhabitants of Paradise which made them worthy of it. Earlier in verses 25-27, the character of the inmates of Hell has been delineated. Readers may look it up; now, in contrast, the fate of those worthy of Paradise is portrayed: they were the ones who would continue to turn to God and

35. And Paradise shall be brought close to the righteous, though it shall not be far away.

36. Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhasharī, *Al-Kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, n.d.), 393.

37. It will be said: This is what had been promised to you for every person who turned to God and had heeded the limits set by God,

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would abide by the limits set by Him. If both these traits are reflected upon, it will become evident that one of them relates to the heart and the other to the deeds. If a person's heart is alive and vibrant, then in all the humdrum of worldly activities his heart remains inclined to his Lord. He never becomes so negligent or arrogant that he becomes forgetful of God's limits and prohibitions and violates them. If because of some prompting from the soul, he at times exceeds limits his heart immediately realizes the blemish and through sincere repentance he reforms his attitude. These two words depict the inner and outer self of a true believer. It is evident from them that to be a sincere believer forsaking this world is not necessary; in fact, his real test is that while leading this worldly life he prove himself to be اَوَّابٍ حَفِيْظٍ. It should remain in consideration that a believers trip to the mosque five times a dead is meant to keep alive in him this spirit to turn to God. Through this it is as if a person remains attached to his centre of gravity and Satan is not able to get the better of him so that he gets involved in indecent and ignoble acts: the Qur'ān says: اِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (٤٥:٢٩) (indeed, the prayer fends off lewdness and evil, (29:45)).

مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَجَآءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُّنِيْبِ ۝٣٣[38]

Earlier on it was said about those who had become worthy of Hell that they have doubts about the Hereafter and instead of God have found other supports to cling to. There it was stated that these two things are the mother of all ailments. Here, in contrast, it is stated about the dwellers of Paradise that they are not inflicted with any such doubt; in fact, while not being able to see God, they fear him and since they did not find any other support for themselves, they came in the presence of their Lord with a heart that was always inclined to Him because they pinned all their hopes in Him and did not turn to any one else.

The attribute الرَّحْمٰنَ in مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمٰنَ is meant to direct attention to a great piece of wisdom: it is the essential consequence of this attribute that the Almighty at last bring forth a day in which He reward people who spent their lives as اَوَّابٍ حَفِيْظٍ and punish those who created mischief by being كَفَّار and عَنِيْد. If He does not do this, then it would, God forbid, mean that virtue and vice, justice and injustice are equal in His eyes even though this is absolutely against His attributes of being the Most Gracious and the Ever-Merciful. Thus at another place in the Qur'ān, it is said that the Day of Judgement is a consequence of God's mercy: كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ۭ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ. (٦:١٢) (God has decreed mercy for Himself, and shall definitely gather you on the Day of Judgement, (6:12)). Since believers fully understood this attribute of God and what it necessitates, for this reason they regarded the Day of Judgement to be a certainty and remained vigilant about it.

38. Who had feared the Merciful God, though he had not seen Him, and has come with a heart inclined.

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The letter ب in بِالْغَيْبِ is an adverb of place. About the rejecters of the Day of Judgement it was said that when they would see the reality, it will be said to them: لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِيْ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَآءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيْدٌ. (٢٢:٥٠) (you remained heedless of this day, so We have removed your veil. So sharp is your eyesight today, 50:22)). On the contrary, the believers while living in the previous world and without observing the events of the Hereafter feared their Lord merely on the basis of the arguments found in support of it within their own selves and in the world around them as well as because of the teachings of the prophets.

The expression قَلْبٍ مُّنِيْبٍ refers to the heart which remained inclined towards God whether in happiness or in sorrow and whether in hope or in despair.

ادْخُلُوْهَا بِسَلٰمٍ ۭ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُلُوْدِ ﴿٣٤﴾[39]

They will be asked to enter Paradise with peace; they will neither have any regrets of the past nor any fear of the future. The time has come for fulfilling the promise of handing over the eternal kingdom to them. This shall never be taken away from them neither will any problem arise for them in it. The words used in Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15:46) are: اُدْخُلُوْهَا بِسَلٰمٍ اٰمِنِيْنَ (٤٦:١٥) (enter it with full safety with nothing to fear, (15:46)). It has been mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān that angels will welcome the dwellers of Paradise with peace; in fact, messages of salutation from God are also mentioned; however, this has another context. Here what is implied is the same as is corroborated by the above quoted words of Sūrah al-Ḥijr.

لَهُمْ مَّا يَشَاۗءُوْنَ فِيْهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيْدٌ ﴿٣٥﴾[40]

In Paradise, they will get whatever they want and God will have even more for them. The implication is that they will get what they desire; however, for them God will have such blessings as they will not even be able to imagine that they are so that they may wish for them. God will grant them these favours without they expressing any desire for them. While referring to this very fact, the words used at another instance are: فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّآ اُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ قُرَّةِ اَعْيُنٍ (١٧:٣٢) (no mortal knows what bliss of the eyes will be in store for them, (32:17)).

Section III: Verses (36-45)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. First the Quraysh are warned that while being lured away with conceit and pride of their power and strength, they should

39. Enter this Paradise in peace. This is the eternal day.

40. They will get whatever they will wish for and We have for them even more than this.

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not dare fight God. Before them, many nations have inhabited this area which were much more stronger and mightier but when God seized them, they were not able to save themselves. If they have hearts which can understand and ears which can hear, then the anecdotes of these nations have great lessons for them.

After that, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should bear with patience whatever his enemies say. The Day of Judgement is certain to come. Weariness has not overcome God after creating heavens and the earth so that He will not be able to recreate man. So people should be on guard and the day is approaching when the caller of God will call out and every one will come out from their graves. So, the Prophet (sws) should bear with patience and diligently adhere to the prayer. It is not his responsibility to forcibly make people believers. On the contrary, he should inform of God's warning through this Qur'ān those who want to get informed.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هُمْ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا فَنَقَّبُوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ ۭ هَلْ مِنْ مَّحِيْصٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَذِكْرٰى لِمَنْ
كَانَ لَهٗ قَلْبٌ اَوْ اَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيْدٌ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ۠ وَّمَا مَسَّنَا مِنْ
لُّغُوْبٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰي مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ الْغُرُوْبِ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَ
اَدْبَارَ السُّجُوْدِ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَاسْتَمِعْ يَوْمَ يُنَادِ الْمُنَادِ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيْبٍ ﴿٤١﴾ يَّوْمَ يَسْمَعُوْنَ الصَّيْحَةَ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُرُوْجِ ﴿٤٢﴾
اِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيٖ وَنُمِيْتُ وَاِلَيْنَا الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٤٣﴾ يَوْمَ تَشَقَّقُ الْاَرْضُ عَنْهُمْ سِرَاعًا ۭ ذٰلِكَ حَشْرٌ عَلَيْنَا يَسِيْرٌ ﴿٤٤﴾ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا
يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِجَبَّارٍ ۣ فَذَكِّرْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مَنْ يَّخَافُ وَعِيْدِ ﴿٤٥﴾

And how many a nation have We destroyed before them who were mightier in power than they. So, they went forth in the land wherever they possibly could: is their a place of shelter? Indeed, in the account of these nations is a lesson for people who have a heart or who earnestly give ear. (36-37)

And We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in six days and no weariness came upon Us. So, bear then, with patience whatever they say and glorify your Lord celebrating His praises and blessings before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and glorify Him in the night also, and also after the times of the sun's[41] descent. (38-40)

And listen for the day when the caller will call from a place very near. The day when they will hear the clamour with what is certain to come. That will be the Day of coming forth. Indeed, it is We who give life and We who give death and to Us shall be the return. On that Day, the earth shall be rent asunder from above them and they shall rush from it in haste. Easy for us is this assembling together. (41-43)

41. The word which has actually been typed here is "stars." It obviously is a typographical error because it is evident from the author's explanation that he is referring to the sun.

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We are well aware about what they say and you are not one who can force himself on them. So, remind with this Qur'ān those who fear My warning. (44-45)

Explanation

وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هُمْ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا فَنَقَّبُوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ ؕ هَلْ مِنْ مَّحِيْصٍ ﴿۳۶﴾[42]

This is a warning to the Quraysh that their power and strength should not mislead them into conceit and pride that no harm can come to them. Many a nation before them who were much stronger and mightier than them were destroyed by God. If any of from them survived they had to make their way to various other countries wherever they could find refuge.

The expression نَقَّبَ فِي الاَرضِ means صَارَ فِيْهَا طَلَبًا لِلْمَهْرَب (and he went about find a place of refuge in the land). The words هَلْ مِنْ مَّحِيْصٍ depict the motive behind their seeking refuge in other places: in order to find shelter each person went to whichever place he could find refuge in.

This is the state of a nation faced with ruin and destruction. The influential elements of the society are destroyed and once their national strength is ravaged, whoever among the commoners survive, they try to seek refuge wherever possible.

It is evident from the anecdotes of various nations recorded in the Qur'ān that some of them were completely destroyed by divine punishment like the people of Noah (sws), the 'Ād and the Thamūd. In the case of some others, their arrogant and affluent classes were destroyed while their common masses were dispersed here and there. The Pharaoh and his people faced this second scenario. He and his army and court officials were completely engulfed by the sea. Whoever remained were for fear of the enemy and because of their shattered state system scattered at various places in seeking refuge.

Very similar was the situation of the people of Sabā'. Numerous people were ravaged by the deluge that came. The survivors were compelled to seek shelter and refuge in other places because of the barrenness of their lands and because of straitened economic situation. The calamities which befell the Jews were also of similar nature. Those who were saved from loot and carnage had to roam and wonder in every nook and corner of the world. Even in Muslim history, there are many exemplary tales of this sort. Are not the details of the calamities which befell Baghdād, Cordova and Delhi recorded in our history? If we read them, we will draw the conclusion that it is not merely the Quraysh who are warned in this verse, we too can learn many lessons from them on the condition that we make the effort.

Some exegetes have interpreted the expression نَقَّبُوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ to mean that these people in their times of ascent racked the nooks and corners of the world through their victorious skirmishes.[43] However, this view is not correct. The word تَنْقِيْبٌ is not used for

42. And how many a nation have We destroyed before them who were mightier in power than they. So, they went forth in the land wherever they possibly could: is their a place of shelter?

43. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 230. (*Translator*)

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victorious campaigns; it is used to roam the land for finding refuge due to fear. Lexicographers[44] have recorded this meaning, and I have referred to it earlier. Parallels from classical Arabic also corroborate this meaning only, and the subsequent expression هَلۡ مِنۡ مَّحِيۡصٍ also reinforces this view; other wise it will be totally out of place.

اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَذِكۡرٰى لِمَنۡ كَانَ لَهٗ قَلۡبٌ اَوۡ اَلۡقَى السَّمۡعَ وَ هُوَ شَهِيۡدٌ ﴿۳۷﴾[45]

The antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun is the anecdotes of previous nations briefly referred to in the previous verse. The verse says that there are a lot of lessons to be learnt in the accounts of these nations for hearts which can really learn such lessons and for ears which are prepared to intently listen to what is said to them.

The word قَلۡبٌ is in its complete meaning ie. an alive and vibrant heart. The Almighty has made hearts to be sympathetic, to learn lessons and to be reflective. As long as a person's heart is capable of these, it is alive and as long as the heart is alive, a person is also alive. This is because real life is because of the life of the heart. If the heart loses this ability, then a person is dead as well however much blood may run in his veins.

The words اَوۡ اَلۡقَى السَّمۡعَ وَ هُوَ شَهِيۡدٌ imply that if the heart is not fully alive, then at least this much should be the case that if someone reasonable tells a person something, then he is able to listen to it with attention. Being attentive too is a great blessing for a person. At times, this too dispenses a person of this negligence and the ability to learn lessons is revived in him. However, if a person is such a wretch that neither is his heart alive nor is he able to pay heed to the calls of reason, then how can sense and sanity make way in him?

Though the context of these verses is to admonish and rebuke the Quraysh, it also assures and comforts the Prophet (sws): if the leaders of the Quraysh are not being touched by the Qur'ān he is reciting out to them, then the real reason for this is that neither do their hearts have the ability to be moved nor are they prepared to pay heed to his calls; so how can he make them understand his message?

وَ لَقَدۡ خَلَقۡنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ وَ مَا بَيۡنَهُمَا فِىۡ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ۖ وَّ مَا مَسَّنَا مِنۡ لُّغُوۡبٍ ﴿۳۸﴾ فَاصۡبِرۡ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ وَ سَبِّحۡ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّكَ قَبۡلَ طُلُوۡعِ الشَّمۡسِ وَ قَبۡلَ الۡغُرُوۡبِ ﴿۳۹﴾ وَ مِنَ الَّيۡلِ فَسَبِّحۡهُ وَ اَدۡبَارَ السُّجُوۡدِ ﴿۴۰﴾[46]

In these verses, the discourse clearly shifts to assure and comfort the Prophet (sws)

44. See, for example: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 1, 769. (*Translator*)

45. Indeed, in the account of these nations is a lesson for people who have a heart or who earnestly give ear.

46. And We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in six days and no weariness came upon Us. So, bear then, with patience whatever they say and glorify your Lord celebrating His praises and blessings before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and glorify Him in the night also, and also after the times of the sun's descent.

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and to urge him to be patient. Initially, it is said that the Almighty has not become tired after creating the heavens and the earth so that He is unable to re-create them. He should rest assured that the Day from which they are being warned of is bound to come. He should show patience on what they say and for this he should be as diligent as he can in offering the prayer.

The creation of the heavens and the earth in six days has also been mentioned in previous *sūrahs*. At those instances, I have explained that the word أَيَّامٍ refers to days of God and thus means periods of time. I have also clarified the fact that when this six-day creation is mentioned in the Qur'ān, the purpose is point to the elaborate and thorough nature of creation. This shows that this world has neither come into existence accidentally nor is a means of amusement for a merry-maker; on the contrary, it is a meaningful and purposeful place and an essential consequence of this meaningfulness is that after it a day come in which this meaningfulness becomes evident.

The words وَ مَا مَسَّنَا مِنْ لُّغُوْبٍ imply that no one should be deceived by the fact that working for six continuous days has made God weary and that He does not have the power to recreate this world. Just as God was fresh before creating them, He is still fresh after He has accomplished this task, and just as He was not unable to create them the first time, He will not be unable to create them the second time. The sentence has a ring of sarcasm in it. The implication is that those who are regarding recreation of this world to be improbable should very well know that His power and prowess is fully intact. Not the slightest change has come about in it. In a passing way, this verse also expresses scorn at the notion of the Jews mentioned in the Torah that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh.

The words فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ urge the Prophet (sws) to show patience if his opponents are rejecting him. The words مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ refer to objections of these rejecters, one example of which is mentioned earlier in verses 2-3 of the *sūrah*: فَقَالَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا شَيْءٌ عَجِيْبٌ. ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَ كُنَّا تُرَابًا ۚ ذٰلِكَ رَجْعٌۢ بَعِيْدٌ (٥٠: ٢-٣) (it is a very strange thing that after we die and become dust we would be returned to life again; such a return is very improbable, (50:2-3)). The implication is that this world which the Almighty has created with such thorough planning will definitely culminate in the purpose it was created for. God has not become exhausted after creating it so that He cannot re-create it; however, people whose hearts are dead will accept this reality only when they will see it from their eyes. The Prophet (sws) should be patient to the opposition of such people; so he must exercise patience until the reality manifests before themselves in a manner that they cannot deny it.

The words وَ سَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَ قَبْلَ الْغُرُوْبِ explain the procedure through which the trait of patience can be acquired: he should be diligent in the prayer as much as he can. Without a deep relationship with God, that patience cannot be acquired which in the face of severe opposition from the adversaries makes a person persevere on the right path. At another instance, this reality is point to by the words: وَمَا صَبْرُكَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ

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(۱۲۷:۱٦) (you cannot be patient unless with the help of God, (16:127)). Since the sole means to seek help from God is the prayer so wherever the Prophet (sws) has been asked to show patience on the attitude of his opponents, he has is always asked to show diligence in the prayer. Examples of this can be seen in the previous *sūrah* and in the succeeding ones too, clear and effective examples of this can be seen.

The expression سَبِّحۡ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّكَ in fact connotes the prayer with respect to remembering God. This remembrance of God has two parts*: tasbīḥ* and *ḥamd*. The former has a ring of negation in it and means "to absolve God from things which are against His majesty," while the latter has a ring of affirmation in it and means "to affirm all attributes which are in accordance with His majesty." Together this negation and affirmation firmly instil the true comprehension of God in the hearts of people and it is through this firm instilment that the relationship of a person with his Creator is established on sound footings, which is the fountainhead of all patience and trust. If some weakness or imbalance arises in them, then a person's conception of God becomes defective and this mistake totally disrupts his thoughts and deeds.

The words قَبۡلَ طُلُوۡعِ الشَّمۡسِ وَقَبۡلَ الۡغُرُوۡبِ. وَمِنَ الَّيۡلِ فَسَبِّحۡهُ وَاَدۡبَارَ السُّجُوۡدِ refer to the times of the day in which the *tasbīḥ* and *ḥamd* of God is required with special emphasis. In general, the constant remembrance of God keeps a person alive. It is His remembrance through which the hearts remains alive, contented and happy; however, just as there are special seasons and times in this world for various tasks, similarly there are special times for the worship of God as well. If one reflects on the times prescribed for the prayer, it becomes evident that they are the ones in which some great change takes place in this universe, which reminds a person of the power and greatness of God and in which other prominent objects of this universe too can be witnessed prostrating before God. The most important and special time among them is the time of *fajr*. It is the time when the night folds up and the stars prostrate before the Almighty and the dawn of a new day appears. The time of *'aṣr* is directly opposite to it when the activities of the day enter into the last phase and the sun bows its head to prostrate before the Almighty. Thus the verse first mentions these very two times: the words قَبۡلَ طُلُوۡعِ الشَّمۡسِ refer to the time of *fajr*, and the words قَبۡلَ الۡغُرُوۡبِ refer to that of *'aṣr*. The importance both these prayers have in Islam is mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth.

After mentioning two important prayers of the day, the words وَمِنَ الَّيۡلِ فَسَبِّحۡهُ allude to that fact that people should glorify their Lord at night also. There are two prayers of the night: the *'ishā'* and the *tahajjud* prayer. Though the latter is not an obligatory prayer, however as a means to inculcate patience occupies the most importance. This has been explained at various places in this exegesis, and *inshā'Allāh* in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Muzzammil it will be explained even further.

The word اَدۡبَارَ in وَ اَدۡبَارَ السُّجُوۡدِ is the plural of دُبُرٌ, which means "back." Generally, people have interpreted this to mean that after prostrations too, people should glorify

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God.[47] However, I am inclined to believe that the word سُجُود here is a verbal noun and it refers to the prostrations of the sun; the prayers before the rising and setting of the sun are mentioned in the previous part of the verse. In other words, just as there are timings for prayers before the rising and setting of the sun similarly after the prostration of the sun there are times of glorifying the Almighty. Since the sun has already been mentioned earlier, specifying it was not required again. The word اَدْبَارَ is enough to specify that the purpose was to mention the prayer after the sun's prostration and the prayers before whose rising and setting are mentioned earlier. Had not the words وَ مِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ occurred between the two expressions, there would have been no difficulty in understanding this. In this case, the discourse would have been something to the effect: "Glorify God in the times before the rising and setting of the sun and after its prostration." In this interpretation, everyone is easily inclined to think that the prostration here means the sun's prostration. However, in case the discourse had been such, then a very important aspect of wisdom in religion would have not have become evident that has now become evident in this verse: the sequence of the prayers is commensurate with their importance and greatness in religion. As a result, it was essential that the *fajr* prayer be mentioned the foremost, followed by *'aṣr*. Thus the words قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ الْغُرُوْبِ mention both these prayers. I have already alluded to earlier that the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth specially emphasize these prayers. After this, the words وَ مِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ refer to the *'ishā'* and *tahajjud* prayers which occupy the same importance in the night time prayers as is occupied by the *fajr* and *'aṣr* prayers in the day time prayers. After this, the words وَاَدْبَارَ السُّجُوْدِ refer to the *ẓuhr* and *maghrib* prayers which refer to the times of the descent and prostrating of the sun.

While explaining verse 78 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ), I have explained the various stages of the sun's *dulūk* (descent).[48] Here the word used is سُجُود and it too has many stages. When it is used for the sun and other stars, then it refers to their setting and descent. Here in this verse too, all these stages can be implied. In other words, when it descends from the vertical direction and comes below the line of sight and then when it disappears from the horizon. The prayers of *ẓuhr*, *'aṣr* and *maghrib* occur in these times. The *'aṣr* prayer is mentioned here with special emphasis by the words قَبْلَ الْغُرُوْبِ with the underlying wisdom alluded to earlier. For this reason, only two prayers remain: the *ẓuhr* prayer which occurs in the first phase of the sun's prostration and the *maghrib* prayer which occurs in its last phase. In other words, this verse refers to all the timings in which the five prayers are offered. The Prophet (sws) has prescribed these very times for prayers.

This subject is mentioned in the Qur'ān in different styles, and at each place I have been explaining it. It will only add to the bulk. For the satisfaction of the readers, I

47. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 4, 231. (*Translator*)

48. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 3, 773-774.

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will cite only one example from Sūrah Ṭāhā in which this subject is discussed very clearly:

فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوْبِهَا ۚ وَمِنْ اٰنَآئِ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَاَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ (۱۳۰:۲۰) .

Therefore bear with what they say. And give glory to your Lord while celebrating His praises before sunrise and before sunset. And give glory to Him at night time and at the ends of the day. (20:130)

The implications of اَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ have been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā. Its details can be looked up.[49]

وَاسْتَمِعْ يَوْمَ يُنَادِ الْمُنَادِ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيْبٍ ۙ﴿۴۱﴾[50]

The word استماع means "to attentively to something." The verse says that if these people are denying, then let them do so. The Prophet (sws) should disregard what they say; he should attentively lend his ears for the summoner who will summon from a place near. The summoner refers to the angel who will sound the trumpet which has been referred to earlier by the words: نُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْوَعِيْدِ. (۲۰:۵۰) (and the trumpet shall be sounded; that will be the day when Our warnings shall materialize, (50:20)). The words مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيْبٍ imply that today these negligent people regard all these happenings to be far off and far-fetched; however, on that day, the ears of every person will hear this sound from a very nearby place. The style adopted here is very similar to that of the following verse of Sūrah al-Dukhān:

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَاْتِي السَّمَآءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِيْنٍ. (۱۰:۴۴)

Wait for the day when the sky will pour down palpable smoke. (44:10)

The purpose firstly is to portray the certainty and horrific nature of the event and secondly to the fact that its time is very near; the summoner may summon any time.

The verse addresses the Prophet (sws) and this has a great eloquence in it. It is evident from it that if these thick-headed people are showing indifferent to this event, he should let them be and he himself should be on the lookout for its arrival. This verse portrays the true picture of how a sane person should show vigilance to the Hereafter. In verse 19 earlier, it has been stated that every person should regard it to be hovering over him; it is appended to every person's death and no one knows when he will die. Foolish are those who regard it to be far off.

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49. Ibid., vol. 4, 244-245.

50. And listen for the day when the caller will call from a place very near.

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يَّوْمَ يَسْمَعُوْنَ الصَّيْحَةَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُرُوْجِ ﴿۴۲﴾[51]

The word يَوْمَ of this verse is the permutative of the يَوْمَ of the previous verse, and the الصَّيْحَةَ refers to the cry of the trumpet. The word حَق refers to the Day of Judgement, as has been explained above in verse 19. Calling it thus shows that it is certain and sure to come.

The verse in conjunction with the previous one says that people should vigilantly wait for the sound of the trumpet whose shout these people shall hear on that day to herald its advent. That day will be the day for them to come out of their graves.

اِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْىٖ وَنُمِيْتُ وَاِلَيْنَا الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۴۳﴾[52]

Mentioned here is the argument of the coming out mentioned in the previous verse: it is God Who creates and it He Who gives death, and this is something which no one can deny; so how can it be difficult for God to re-create them? This argument has been explained in detail earlier.

The words وَاِلَيْنَا الْمَصِيْرُ bring forth another obvious argument of what is stated earlier: when it is God Who gives life and when it is God Who gives death, then this not only necessitates that God is fully capable of creating again but also that everyone will return to God. If anyone is in the deception that if ever the Hereafter comes his alleged deities and intercessors will be of help to him, he should do away with this notion. How can those who have no discretion over life and have no authority over death assume power and authority in the Hereafter?

يَوْمَ تَشَقَّقُ الْاَرْضُ عَنْهُمْ سِرَاعًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ حَشْرٌ عَلَيْنَا يَسِيْرٌ ﴿۴۴﴾[53]

This is a portrayal of people emerging from the graves on that day. After the trumpet is sounded, the earth shall tear asunder from above them and they will briskly come out of it. The word سِرَاعًا is an accusative of state from the genitive pronoun in عَنْهُمْ. At other places in the Qur'ān, this depiction is made by saying that just as locusts and moths quickly appear, these people with similar quickness will come out of their graves.

The words ذٰلِكَ حَشْرٌ عَلَيْنَا يَسِيْرٌ imply that no one should be misled by the fact that to recover people from the earth God will have to make elaborate arrangements which He will not be able to or that this would require a lot of time. All this will take place in

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51. The Day when they will hear the clamour with what is certain to come. That will be the Day of coming forth.

52. Indeed, it is We who give life and We who give death and to Us shall be the return.

53. On that Day, the earth shall be rent asunder from above them and they shall rush from it in haste. Easy for us is this assembling together.

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the blink of an eye and will be fairly easy for God.

نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِجَبَّارٍ ۣ فَذَكِّرْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مَنْ يَّخَافُ وَعِيْدِ ﴿۴۵﴾[54]

In verse 39 earlier, it was said that the Prophet (sws) should be patient on what they say. Now here it is said that what they say is in the knowledge of God. In other words, if He knows what they say, the Prophet (sws) should not be sad and leave the matter to God. God will take care of the situation and the Prophet (sws) should keep on doing his work with patience.

The words وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِجَبَّارٍ imply that Prophet (sws) should also keep in mind that he has not been deputed to make people believers so that if they do not profess faith he will be held accountable for it. His responsibility is only to remind people, and this he should keep doing. If they do not profess faith, then they themselves will bear the consequences.

The *sūrah* ends on the note it began with: فَذَكِّرْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مَنْ يَّخَافُ وَعِيْدِ. It began with the mention of the Qur'ān. At the end, a reminder is sounded again that the Prophet's responsibility is only to remind and the Qur'ān suffices as a reminder. He should remind through the Qur'ān all those who intend to fear God's warning. Those who do not want to show this fear and for the substantiation of the prophethood of Muḥammad are demanding punishment from him should be consigned to their fortunes. They shall soon see their fate.

With grace of God, I come to the end of this exegesis. و آخر دعوانا اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last words are: "gratitude be to God alone.")

Raḥmānābād
18th January 1977 AD
27th Muḥarram al-Ḥarām 1397 AH

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54. We are well aware about what they say and you are not one who can force himself on them. So, remind with this Qur'ān those who fear My warning.

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Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt (51)

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Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous one

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Qāf the previous *sūrah.* Readers have read in the exegesis of Sūrah Qāf that people who were regarding as improbable the claim of the Qur'ān that man will be recreated after his death were answered. In this *sūrah*, a step ahead is taken and the Qur'ānic warnings of punishment as well as reward and punishment are also validated. The central theme of the *sūrah* is explained in its introductory verses as: اِنَّمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَصَادِقٌ.وَّ اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ لَوَاقِعٌ (٥-٦) (indeed what you are being threatened with is true and reward and punishment shall necessarily take place, (5-6)). The *sūrah* is addressed to the rejecters of the Quraysh, and the arguments are based on the reasoning found in the world within man and that around him. At the end, the Prophet (sws) is assured the way he was in the previous *sūrah.*

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-14): By referring to the diverse manifestations of the winds and striped winter clouds, ignorant people who make fun of the Day of reward and punishment by mockingly questioning about its time of arrival are severely reprimanded for their behaviour. They are warned that the doom that shall descend upon them if they deny the Prophet (sws) as well as the Day of Reckoning about which they are being warned of, both are certain to come. Only those who have lost their senses are daring to doubt their certainty. Those who are seeking to hasten that day shall be told that this was what they had sought to hasten.

Verses (15-19): In contrast to the disbelievers, a mention is made of the reward the righteous shall receive, who instead of being inebriated with indifference had spent their lives while remaining fearful of the Day, who slept but little at night and in the early hours of dawn sought their Lord's forgiveness and in whose wealth the deprived had a share.

Verses (20-23): The signs in the heavens and the earth, as well as in the human soul, which testify to the Day of Judgement are alluded to and then it is stated on oath that just as it is very easy for a person to utter a word, creating mankind a second time is as easy for the Almighty.

Verses (24-37): Evidence from history, which further substantiates the imminence of the Day of Judgement, is presented by referring to the anecdotes of Abraham (sws) and Lot (sws). The same angels who had brought glad tidings for Abraham (sws) that he

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would be blessed with a son had unleashed a raging punishment on the people of Lot (sws). God destroyed those who had denied the Prophet Lot (sws), and had saved those who had professed faith in him. These events bear witness historically that the Creator of this Universe takes account of what nations do: the people of Lot (sws) were punished in retribution of their own misdeeds. There is a lesson for those who are fearful of the Almighty in this episode, for the remains of their cities have been preserved by Him.

Verses (38-46): A brief mention is made of the incidents of the Pharaoh and the people of 'Ād and the Thamūd, and the folks of Noah who showed indifference to the law of retribution of nations and did not pay heed to the warnings of their respective messengers. They were totally destroyed by the Almighty Who did not have to do much for this; He just ordered the winds and the clouds to unleash their terror on them.

Verses (47-60): In this concluding section, the whole theme of the *sūrah* has been summed up: it is not difficult for the Almighty, Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and Who has created everything in pairs to create this world a second time: If the Day of Reckoning is certain to come, then people should run towards the Almighty and seek only His nearness. At the end, the Prophet (sws) is assured that all the other prophets before him received no different a treatment at the hands of their people. He is advised to leave these rebellious people to themselves and to remind only those who will benefit from these reminders. He is further consoled by the Almighty that men and jinn have been created by Him only to worship Him. He has not imposed any responsibility on them to feed others nor does He Himself seek sustenance from them. Indeed, He Himself is the Provider of all, Lord of Might and Power. He alone is enough to sustain and provide all those who, irrespective of the circumstances, set out to befittingly worship Him. He shall help them in their endeavours as well and no one will be able to harm them. As far as the wrongdoers are concerned, they shall get in this world what has been ordained for them. In spite of all their outcries to the Almighty to hasten the Day of Judgement, they shall be given the respite needed so that the truth is communicated to them in its ultimate form after which they can have no excuse to deny. Finally, when this period is over, as deemed by the Almighty, they shall encounter the Day about which they are being warned.

Text and Translation

Section I: Verses (1-14)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَالذّٰرِیٰتِ ذَرۡوًا ﴿۱﴾ فَالۡحٰمِلٰتِ وِقۡرًا ﴿۲﴾ فَالۡجٰرِیٰتِ یُسۡرًا ﴿۳﴾ فَالۡمُقَسِّمٰتِ اَمۡرًا ﴿۴﴾ اِنَّمَا تُوۡعَدُوۡنَ لَصَادِقٌ ﴿۵﴾ وَّ اِنَّ
الدِّیۡنَ لَوَاقِعٌ ﴿۶﴾ وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الۡحُبُکِ ﴿۷﴾ اِنَّکُمۡ لَفِیۡ قَوۡلٍ مُّخۡتَلِفٍ ﴿۸﴾ یُّؤۡفَکُ عَنۡہُ مَنۡ اُفِکَ ﴿۹﴾ قُتِلَ الۡخَرّٰصُوۡنَ

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إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ سَاهُونَ ﴿١١﴾ يَسْأَلُونَ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الدِّينِ ﴿١٢﴾ يَوْمَ هُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ يُفْتَنُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ ذُوقُوا فِتْنَتَكُمْ ۖ هَٰذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Fierce winds that scatter dust, then lift a burden, then glide slowly, then apportion matters testify that the punishment you are being threatened with is true and indeed reward and punishment shall certainly take place. The striped winter clouds bear witness. Indeed you are in a state of difference of opinion. Only those who have lost their senses evade it. Accursed be those who wildly guess, who dwell in indifference, totally unaware. They ask: "When will the Day of Judgement come?" The Day when they shall be baked in fire. Taste of your mischief. This is what you had sought to hasten. (1-14)

Explanation

وَالذّٰرِيٰتِ ذَرْوًا ﴿١﴾ فَالْحٰمِلٰتِ وِقْرًا ﴿٢﴾ فَالْجٰرِيٰتِ يُسْرًا ﴿٣﴾ فَالْمُقَسِّمٰتِ اَمْرًا ﴿٤﴾[1]

The وَ in وَالذّٰرِيٰتِ ذَرْوًا signifies an oath. I have been explaining at a number of places in this exegesis that the oaths which are sworn by such objects are not meant to sanctify these objects; the purpose is to bear witness to the truth of a claim which is mentioned later or is evident from the context. Thus this oath too is meant to bear witness. It would be very meaningful in my opinion if وَ is translated as "bears witness."

The word ذَارِيَاتٌ refers to winds which scatter dust. This word is used as an attribute of the winds and so common has it become for the noun it qualifies that it is used in its very place as its substitute. The addition of ذَرْوًا after ذَارِيَاتٌ adds emphasis and stress in the meaning conveyed just as in the case of ضَرَبَ ضَرْبًا the verb has been emphasized. It becomes difficult at times to translate such an emphasis. Here if the word "fierce" is added to winds, then in my opinion the intended meaning would be conveyed.

فَالْحٰمِلٰتِ وِقْرًا: when adjectives are conjugated by the particle ف then this signifies two things: firstly, there is a sequence between them and secondly, these adjectives qualify the same noun. As per this linguistic rule of Arabic, the three adjectives which are mentioned here are necessarily of the winds. The opinion of those who have regarded them to be adjectives of separate nouns is against this rule as well as the parallels of the Qur'ān in this regard.

In Sūrah al-'Ādiyāt the words are:

وَالْعٰدِيٰتِ ضَبْحًا. فَالْمُوْرِيٰتِ قَدْحًا. فَالْمُغِيْرٰتِ صُبْحًا. فَاَثَرْنَ بِهٖ نَقْعًا. فَوَسَطْنَ بِهٖ جَمْعًا. (١٠٠: ١-٥)

Panting, galloping horses bear witness which then produce fire by thumping their hooves, then plunder at dawn, then scatter dust, then barge into a throng. (100:1-5)

1. Fierce winds that scatter dust, then lift a burden, then glide slowly, then apportion matters.

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Obviously, all these attributes are not of separate entities; all of them relate to horses, and deliberation would show that there is a sequence as well in their mention.

There are many examples of this style in classical Arabic literature. I will just cite one example here. A famous couplet of Ibn Zayyābah reads:

يالهف زيابة للحارث
الصابح فالغانم فالآئب

Ya lahfa zayyabata li al-ḥarthi
Al-Ṣābiḥ fa al-ghānim fa al-ā'ib

(An expression of grief from Zayyābah on Ḥārith who attacked, plundered and went away.)[2]

The word وِقْرٌ means "burden and load." In general, it includes all burdens and loads which are borne by winds for example dust and pebbles; however, it conventionally connotes clouds. Thus for example, it is said:

وَ هُوَ الَّذِیْ یُرْسِلُ الرِّیٰحَ بُشْرًۢا بَیْنَ یَدَیْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ حَتّٰۤی اِذَاۤ اَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنٰهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّیِّتٍ فَاَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَآءَ. (۷:۵۷)

He it is Who sends forth the winds as glad tiding before His merciful rain until when they have gathered up a heavy cloud, We drive them on to some dead land and let the rain fall upon it. (7:57)

The attribute فَالْجٰرِیٰتِ یُسْرًا also qualifies winds. The view of people who regard them to refer to ships is incorrect in the light of the principle I have referred to above. The word یُسْرًا means "slow and soft." This is a common norm that first fast and dust-laden winds blow; then they gather clouds from various places and stack them in layers on the place where they have been divinely directed to drench; then these winds become slow and soft and they cause rain to come down.

Consider next the expression: فَالْمُقَسِّمٰتِ اَمْرًا. The words قَسَمَ الاَمْرَ would mean that whatever had been decided for something or what had been ordained for it was received by it. The verse means that after bringing forth clouds on their backs, these winds divide matters, which means that they rain down whatever water they had been directed to on a particular area. Some places are completely drenched and some places are left half thirsty and some places are left totally dry and if the Almighty directs them, they completely flood a place which as a result is utterly routed. These multifarious effects caused by winds at various places are amazing. They deal with one

2. Al-Tabrayzī, *Dīwān al-ḥamāsah*, vol. 1, 39.

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nation in one manner and with another in another manner. For one nation, these merciful clouds descend as glad tidings; for another, these clouds stir up the torment of storms. Details are forthcoming.

اِنَّمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَصَادِقٌ ۝ وَّ اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ لَوَاقِعٌ ۝[3]

These verses form the *muqsam 'alayh* (complement of oath) of the above oaths: these multifarious effects of winds which people persistently observe bear witness that what they have been threatened with is absolutely true and that reward and punishment will definitely take place.

In the opinion of my mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, the word تُوْعَدُوْنَ is from وَعَدَ and covers all things promised by the prophets.[4] They include the Hereafter, reward and punishment, mercy and ruthlessness. To him the next verse: وَ اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ لَوَاقِعٌ is a mention of the specific after the general. However, I am inclined to believe that the word تُوْعَدُوْنَ is from وعيد and here it refers to that specific punishment which necessarily afflicts the addressees who deny their messenger. In other words, my opinion is that the oaths sworn by the multifarious effects produced by the winds is for two reasons: firstly, the punishment with which the Quraysh are being threatened with in case of their rejection of the truth and which they were only regarding as a bluff, is not a bluff; it is a threat that is certain to materialize; secondly, reward and punishment is bound to come which they are regarding as improbable.

I find several arguments going in favour of my view; details are not required; however, I will allude to three things here.

Firstly, the occasion of both these components of the *muqsam 'alayh* is ascertained as two separate entities in a very natural way.

Secondly, the messengers of God warned their people of two punishments: firstly, the punishment that they will face in this world if they persist in their denial; secondly, the punishment that they will necessarily face in the Hereafter if they die on disbelief. Both these types of punishments are mentioned in the Hereafter and I have been explaining this throughout. This requires that both these punishment be mentioned such that oaths bear evidence to them. Details are forthcoming.

Thirdly, in the forthcoming verses, the Qur'ān has referred to certain nations who had denied their respective messengers and these events are mentioned as a substantiation of the threat alluded to in these verses. At theses instances, readers can see that the Qur'ān has specially highlighted the multifarious effects produced by the winds.

Here an important point worthy of consideration is that the threatened punishment

3. Testify that the punishment you are being threatened with is true and indeed reward and punishment shall certainly take place.

4. Al-Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 97-98.

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of this world is mentioned in verbs while the reward and punishment of the Hereafter is mentioned in nouns. The reason for this is that the punishment which was meted in this world to various nations were specific events and conditional to certain factors. However, reward and punishment of the Hereafter is an essential consequence of the purpose for which this world has been created. For this reason, the first of these is mentioned as a verb and the second as a noun.

وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ ۝[7]

The word السَّمَآءِ can refer both to the sky and to the clouds. It is used in both these meanings in the Qur'ān. However, if it is interpreted to mean the sky, then it has to be understood together with the attribute of ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ appended to it. For this reason, it is this attribute which needs research. My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī has researched out the meaning of this attribute in his exgesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt in the light of the parallels of classical Arabic literature. I will try to summarize it in his own words in the following paragraphs:

> The word حَبَكٌ means "to fasten and to tie a knot." Here it is used for the strength and firmness which is incorporated in the structure of a thing. The word حَبَاك has sprung from this word. Its plural is حُبُك which refers to the stripes and lines which are made evident in some thick or other cloth made of strong material. In the opinion of al-Farrā, the word حُبُك refers to the stripes and ripples which are created in sand or stationed water when wind blows over them. From here, this word came to be used for clouds as well because clouds also appear in the sky in the form of stacked waves and piled up layers of cotton flakes. Imru' al-Qays while praising towering castles on which clouds are overspread says:
>
> مكللة حمراء ذات أسرة
> لها حبك كأنها من وصائل
> *Mukallalatanṇ ḥamrā'a dhata asirratiṇ*
> *Lahā ḥubukuṇ ka annahā min waṣā'il*
>
> (Hovering over these castles are red-striped clouds as if they are striped sheets of cloth.)[8]
>
> This is a description of the winter clouds and a very true depiction of their colour and being stacked in layers …

5. The striped winter clouds bear witness.

6. 'Abd al-Qādir ibn 'Umar al-Baghdādī, *Khazānah al-adab fī lubb-i lubāb lisān al-'arab*, 1st ed., vol. 11 (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, n.d.), 186.

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People who have interpreted the expression to mean ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ (the sky decked with stars) whether from the aspect of its strength and stability or because stars are knitted in it have erred in this view … this word is used for stripes, lines, wrinkles and waves.[7]

In the light of this research by Imām Farāhī, this oath is sworn by the red-striped winter clouds which appear with the cold northern winds and which had a great role in the destruction of previous nations who had incurred the wrath of God (details are forthcoming). In other words, after winds, this oath by the clouds is in fact a completion of the previous oath. The reason for this is that wind and clouds are inseparable. The addition of this oath is meant to specially point to the destructive nature of the winds.

إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ ﴿٨﴾[8]

It is evident from concomitant indication that this verse is not the *muqsam 'alayh* (complement of oath). It is a rebuke on the attitude adopted by the adversaries of the Prophet (sws). The *muqsam 'alayh* has already been stated earlier. And since the second oath is only a completion of the first one, there is no need to repeat the *muqsam 'alayh* after it. In place of it, the rejecters of the Quraysh are ticked off. They are told that they are inflicted with an open difference of opinion and contradiction; otherwise in the presence of these testimonies neither is there any possibility of denying the warnings of the punishment nor is there any reason to doubt the promised reward and punishment.

There are many examples found in the Qur'ān in which because of concomitant indication there occurs in place of the *muqsam 'alayh* a sentence of reprimand and reproach. A very obvious example of this has already been witnessed in Sūrah Qāf, the previous *sūrah*:

قٓ ۚ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ الْمَجِيْدِ. بَلْ عَجِبُوْٓا اَنْ جَآءَهُمْ مُّنْذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَقَالَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا شَيْءٌ عَجِيْبٌ. (٥٠: ١-٢)

This is Sūrah Qāf. By the glorious Qur'ān! [This is the word of God]. In fact, they were confounded by the fact that a warner from amongst themselves had come to them. So these disbelievers had said: "This is a very strange thing." (50:1-2)

One can see that the *muqsam 'alayh* is not present here; in its place the adversaries are rebuked for their blatant dishonesty. This very style is adopted in Sūah al-Burūj thus:

7. Al-Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 98-99.
8. Indeed you are in a state of difference of opinion.

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وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوْجِ. وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُوْدِ. وَشَاهِدٍ وَّمَشْهُوْدٍ. قُتِلَ اَصْحٰبُ الْاُخْدُوْدِ. (۸۷: ۱-٤)

By the heavens consisting of forts and the promised day and one who sees and that what is seen. Doomed are the companions of the ditch of fuelled-fire. (87:1-4)

The expression قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ refers to their contradiction with relation to the Hereafter and reward and punishment. I have written at many places in this exegesis that not all the disbelievers openly denied the Hereafter. Together with the deniers, there existed a group of hesitants who did not openly reject it; they only regarded it to be improbable. Similarly, there existed a large group among them who did not regard the Hereafter to be improbable; they reckoned that their matter will be resolved in the Hereafter through the help of their deities and intercessors who will save them through their intercession. This group on the one hand acknowledged all the attributes of God which were His obvious and essential attributes and which necessitated reward and punishment; on the other hand, they either had doubts about the obvious consequences of these attributes or denied them. It is to this contradiction and confusion of theirs which this verse refers to. The purpose is to tell them that what the Qur'ān is informing them of is an obvious reality of this universe only if they allow their minds to think correctly and not unnaturally hinder this thought process. Readers are advised to look up what I have written under (٥) فَهُمْ فِيْٓ اَمْرٍ مَّرِيْجٍ of the previous *sūrah*. In my opinion, both instances depict the same reality.

يُّؤْفَكُ عَنْهُ مَنْ اُفِكَ ۝٩[9]

This is an independent sentence and not an attribute of قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ. The implication is that if these people think after cleansing themselves of this contradiction, then the matter of reward and punishment is an obvious reality; however people whose intellect has lost its way are led to reject it. The word إِفْكٌ means "to lose way" and the word مَنْ اُفِكَ refers to a person who has lost his senses. This is actually an allusion to the established practice of God stated in فَلَمَّا زَاغُوْٓا اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ. (٦١: ٥) (so when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray, (61:5)) and in other similar verses. In other words, when people did not properly use their sense the Almighty according to His law made them lose their senses. As a result, they are not even being able to see what is being borne witness to by every nook and corner of this universe.

قُتِلَ الْخَرّٰصُوْنَ ۝١٠ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ غَمْرَةٍ سَاهُوْنَ ۝١١[10]

This sentence is also meant to scold and rebuke them: these people indulge in

9. Only those who have lost their senses evade it.
10. Accursed be those who wildly guess, who dwell in indifference, totally unaware.

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conjecture a lot and have stopped using their intellect. For this reason, they are not being able to understand the arguments drawn from the world within man and from the one outside him which the Qur'ān is directing their attention to. Being deprived of sagacity, they are now relying entirely on conjecture and speculation. It is on the basis of this very conjecture and speculation that they are prepared to reject the obvious truth which is against their desires even though conjecture can in no way take the place of truth. In fact, one day it will become evident to them that the very support they took from speculation to deny the truth was the real reason for their doom.

The word خرص means "to make an estimate." The expression خرص النخل و الکرم means "palm trees or the fruits of grape wines were estimated". The expression خرص فی الحدیث would mean that without reflecting on something, a mere speculation about it was circulated.

The more important and far-reaching a matter is in the life of a person, the more has the Almighty made arrangements for its understanding and comprehension. He has left only those mattes to estimates and conjectures which have no specific importance as far as the consequences are concerned. Matters which are important and which have far-reaching consequences and on which depends the well-being and salvation of a person have not been left to estimation and speculation. He has made them conclusively evident from all aspects so that man is not left with any excuse to deny them. Speculating in such matters is as if a person in a dark night puts off the light the Almighty has provided him and while closing his eyes tries to find his way through mere guesswork.

The most important matter for a person is his fate. For this reason, the Almighty has not left it ambiguous from any aspect. He has guided him from various directions towards the right path so that no possibility of any error remains. He has implanted signs in every part of the heavens and the earth which guide a person to the right path. He has blessed him with eyes which can see these signs if he only cares to use them. He has given him intellect which understands or can understand these signs if he only tries to properly benefit from it. Besides this, the Almighty has innately blessed man with all those inclinations and motivations which are essential to keep a person continuously vigilant in making him adhere to the right path and combat dangers and difficulties. The most ultimate arrangement made by Him in this regard is that through His prophets and messengers and through the Books revealed to them, He has fully made clear the right path as well as the provisions needed to tread this path.

If even after these diverse arrangements made he does not benefit from them and instead uses his conjecture and whims to find some other path to tread, then this clearly means that he dislikes light and wants to wander in the darkness.

The words الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ غَمْرَةٍ سَاهُوْنَ state an attribute of those who use their whims and conjecture. It throws light on the reason why they abandoned the light of God and made their whims and fancies as their guide. The verse says that the reason is that they are surrounded by the darkness of the whims and desires of their fancies and have

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been inflicted with such negligence that they are unable to come out of this state. The word غَمْرَةٍ refers to the darkness of one's base desires and greed for this world. The word سَاهُوْنَ is another enunciative after the first which shows the continuity of their negligence. They have been gripped to such an extent by these things that they do not want to come out of them. If someone tries to wake them up from this slumber and tries to inform them of the reality this weighs down heavily upon them and in order to keep themselves assured, they try to rely on the most baseless of supports they can lay hands on.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَ اَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الدِّيْنِ ﴿١٢﴾[11]

In order to shut the mouths of those who are informing them of reward and punishment, they would inquire from them about its whereabouts. They would ask them when it would appear. The question encompasses rejection, making fun and showing haste – all three things on their part. In other words, what they would imply is that if such a day is to come, then why is it not coming and that their ears are tired of listening to its threats; it has neither come in all this time nor is there any chance of its coming in the future; it is a mere bluff from which they are trying to over-awe them; if there is any truth in it, then they should bring it; without actually observing it, they will not be over-awed by such baseless threats.

The Qur'ān has cited this question of theirs to show that such people try to evade the reality by taking refuge in such lame excuses. This is in spite of the fact that they fully know that if the advent of the Day of Judgement is substantiated by the arguments found in the world within man and the one outside him and if its advent is an essential requirement of the attributes of the Creator of this world, then they cannot deny it by saying that those who are warning them of it are unable show it to them or are unable to tell them about the time of its arrival.

Such an argument is tantamount to denying a reality through conjecture and guesswork. For this reason, the Qur'ān has used the word خَرّٰصُوْنَ for such people.

يَوْمَ هُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ يُفْتَنُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾[12]

The question cited above was not genuine, as has been indicated and was actually meant to refute and make fun of what they were being threatened with. For this reason, the Qur'ān has answered it keeping in view their mentality. It should be evident that those who ask such questions were not unaware of the fact that only God knew the time of its advent and that no one else had this information and ignorance of something cannot change the actual reality. For this reason, instead of answering their question, the Qur'ān has actually portrayed before them what will happen when the

11. They ask: "When will the Day of Judgement come?"

12. The Day when they shall be baked in fire.

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Day will actually arrive: the Day of reward and punishment will take place when they will be cooked in Fire. The implication is that if they want to make fun of it, they are free to do it but they should remember what will befall them when it comes.

I have already presented my research on the word فَتَنَ at an appropriate place in this exegesis. This word also means to burn and heat something and also to test and try someone by making him pass through a trial. Here the word يُفْتَنُوْنَ refers to both these meanings. First to the meaning of heating and burning something, and second to the meaning that the fire in which they will be burnt will be the fire of their desires and worldly adornments they had remained engrossed in the previous world and because of whose love they became indifferent to the Day of Judgement. Explanation is forthcoming.

ذُوْقُوْا فِتْنَتَكُمْ ؕ هٰذَا الَّذِیْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾[13]

In my opinion, the word فِتْنَة relates to its object ie. the things of the world which became a trial for them and whose love induced them to evade the Hereafter have now come before them in their real form; so they should now taste them. This is precisely what they were showing haste for.

Testimonies of Reward and Punishment found in the Effects caused by Clouds and Winds

Here readers may stop and further reflect on the oaths cited above and their relationship with their *muqsam 'alayh* so that it becomes fully evident that these oaths actually substantiate and verify their *muqsam 'alayh.*

Two things are sworn by at the beginning of the *sūrah* and after this two claims are stated. Oaths are sworn by the multifarious effects produced by winds and by the striped clouds. The first claim stated is that the punishment with which they are being threatened with must not be regarded as baseless; it is bound to come. The second claim is that the reward and punishment they are being informed of must not be regarded improbable by them; it too is certain to take place.

Now, readers may reflect on the nature of this relationship between the claim and its substantiation. The first claim is that اِنَّمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَصَادِقٌ (indeed, the punishment with which you are being threatened with is absolutely true). While explaining this verse, I have already tried to elucidate the fact that this refers to that punishment with which every messenger warned his people of: if they do not change their attitude of denial, they shall necessarily be seized by divine punishment.

In this claim, the testimony of reward and punishment found in the effects of the

13. Taste of your mischief. This is what you had sought to hasten.

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winds and clouds is that however much a nation is resourceful and however much it is powerful and mighty, it should not consider itself beyond God's grasp. God does not need to do much to ravage a nation He wants to destroy; He can do so whenever He wants to merely through His clouds and winds. Just as these elements are needed for man's existence and sustenance, they are powerful enough to even destroy him. Further ahead in the *sūrah*, in order to substantiate this claim in the light of history, the examples of the people of Noah (sws), the 'Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Lot (sws) and the people of the Pharaoh are put forth in which it is shown that these nations and peoples had great vanity in their power and might. As a result of this vanity, they made fun of the warnings of their respective messengers and demanded from them to bring about the punishment they were threatening them with and that they were ready to face it. At last, His punishment seized them and for this God did not need to make any elaborate arrangement. The very wind which is essential for life became a ravaging storm for them and the very clouds which made them dance with joy claiming هٰذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا (٤٦:٢٤) (this is a cloud that will drench us, (46:24)) became the scourge of God for them. Here readers may content themselves with these brief allusions; details of the destruction of these nations are forthcoming in the *sūrah.* The Qur'ān has shown there that these mighty nations of the world were inflicted with the same conceit as the Quraysh were in their times. At last, the winds and clouds of God totally routed them in the blink of an eye and they could not stand for a moment against their onslaught. These armies of God are present even today to seize the Quraysh and await His command. History bears witness on the feats of these winds and clouds.

Similarly, these clouds and winds bear witness from many aspects to the second claim viz. the happening of reward and punishment.

The majesties of God's power, wisdom, mercy and providence which manifest as a result of the interaction between clouds and winds have been used by the Qur'ān at various places to adduce many basic facts. There is not just a single sign in them; they carry multifarious signs on the condition that a person reflects on them. In this regard, the following verse is a very comprehensive one:

اِنَّ فِیْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَ اخْتِلَافِ الَّیْلِ وَ النَّهَارِ وَ الْفُلْكِ الَّتِیْ تَجْرِیْ فِی الْبَحْرِ بِمَا یَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَ مَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ مَّآءٍ فَاَحْیَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَ بَثَّ فِیْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ ۪ وَّ تَصْرِیْفِ الرِّیٰحِ وَ السَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَیْنَ السَّمَآءِ وَ الْاَرْضِ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ یَّعْقِلُوْنَ. (٢:١٦٤)

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day and in these ships that sail in the ocean with cargoes beneficial to man and in the water which God sends down from the sky with which He enlivens the earth after its death, dispersing over it all kinds of living beings and in the manifestations

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caused by the winds, and in the obedient clouds that are between sky and earth – surely in these there are signs for men of intellect. (2:164)

In this verse, the effects caused by the winds and the clouds are specially mentioned, and at the end it is said that in them there are many signs for people who reflect. These signs relate to monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter and have already been referred to at relevant places of this exegesis. Here, I will just briefly allude to those signs which relate to the *muqsam 'alayh* ie. reward and punishment.

A very big doubt raised by the rejecters against reward and punishment is that it is highly improbable that a person be raised to life again once he dies and his body decays. This doubt has been discussed in detail in the previous *sūrah*. To refute this doubt among the various arguments presented by the Qur'ān, a prominent one which is presented repeatedly by it in various styles relates to the effects of the winds and the clouds. People who regard the Hereafter to be improbable are called to reflect on a phenomenon they witness every now and then: they often see a land which is totally desolate and dry and there is no form of life in any part of it; suddenly, a wind starts to blow from some direction which then steers some clouds to that place; it then has them stacked upon each other on the horizon of that land; then rain starts to descend from the clouds and very soon the whole area is drenched with water; and then not many days pass when that very land which was once dry and desolate teems with life and becomes lush and luxuriant. If they see these majesties of God's power every now and then, how can raising them back to life after their death be a difficult proposition for Him if He intends to do so?

Similarly, the Almighty has also argued from the effects of these winds and clouds which are responsible for sustaining a whole system of providence. This elaborate arrangement necessitates reward and punishment. How this can be adduced is as follows: the heavens and the earth are closed; neither do the heavens send down rain nor does the earth produce plant life; this only happens when God causes conducive winds to blow from some direction; these winds then bring forth moisture-laden clouds and soak the land; as a result, the earth starts to eject its treasures; the orchards become lush; the crops start to bloom; fields swell with vegetation that not only is beneficial for man but also for his animals. So man should reflect that will the God Who has made such elaborate arrangements for him that He has put the heavens and the earth and the winds and the clouds to his service leave him to merely indulge in these luxuries? Will He not bring forth a day in which He judges whether man realized his obligation towards these favours and lived in gratitude to God? Will He not see who among His creatures used the very favours He had bestowed on them to rebel against Him? It is the right of every favour that a person show gratitude on it and the awareness of accountability for every favour has been ingrained in man by the Almighty. Only those people are devoid of this awareness who pervert their nature.

Similarly, the Almighty has also employed the effects of the winds and the clouds to

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substantiate His law of retribution: He instantaneously makes these winds and clouds a mercy for one nation and a torment for another. It was through the agency of these winds and clouds that He rescued Moses (sws) and his nation and it is through them that He destroyed the Pharaoh and his army. It is evident from this that the Creator of this universe rewards and punishes people: He will not deal in the same manner with the righteous and the wrong-doers; He will deal with each of them in accordance with the requisites of His justice and mercy. Readers are advised to look up the exegesis of verse four: فَالْمُقَسِّمٰتِ اَمْرًا of this *sūrah* given above. This attribute of the winds is thus a manifestation of their Creator's attribute of justice. This bears witness to the fact that a day will necessarily come when God will distribute affairs: those worthy of salvation and mercy will be blessed with His graciousness and forgiveness and those worthy of punishment and torment will be cast into Hell.

Section II: Verses (15-19)

Earlier those people are mentioned who lead a life of indifference and have no concern for the promised reward and punishment. If someone tried to wake them from their slumber of indifference, they tried to silence him by asking about the whereabouts of the Day of Judgement and asking him to bring it. Now in the next section the fate of those people is being mentioned who regarded this Day to be a reality and kept fearing it and prepared themselves for it.

Readers may now proceed to read these verses.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُيُوْنٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ اٰخِذِيْنَ مَآ اٰتٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَبْلَ ذٰلِكَ مُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾ كَانُوْا قَلِيْلًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ
مَا يَهْجَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَ بِالْاَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَ الْمَحْرُوْمِ ﴿۱۹﴾

Indeed, the righteous shall dwell amidst gardens and springs, receiving what has been blessed to them by their Lord. Indeed, they had been among the virtuous before. They slept but little at night and in the early hours of dawn sought forgiveness, and in whose wealth the deprived and those who ask had a share. (15-19)

Explanation

اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُيُوْنٍ ﴿۱۵﴾[14]

The word مُتَّقِيْنَ (pious) is a comprehensive attribute used by the Qur'ān for all those who lead their lives within the bounds and limits set by God. Here too, they are

14. Indeed, the righteous shall dwell amidst gardens and springs.

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primarily referred to; however, since in the earlier verses, those people are mentioned who are indifferent to the Hereafter and to reward and punishment, here in contrast those people are especially alluded to who are heedful to reward and punishment. Thus it specially refers to those people who always regarded themselves to be accountable for every undertaking of theirs and knew that they will be punished for all excesses. In reality, this fear for reward and punishment is the real spirit of *taqwā* (piety). A *taqwā* devoid of this spirit is mere ostentation and pretension which carries no weight before God. About the true pious it is said in this verse that they will be amidst orchards and springs. Earlier the fate of the indifferent was mentioned that they will be cooked in the fire worked up by the very adornments of this world which had lured them away from the Hereafter, and they will be told to taste these adornments. On the other hand, since these people never gave any importance to these adornments, the Almighty will admit them to gardens and springs. Both جَنّٰتٍ (gardens) and عُيُوْنٍ (springs) are inseparable, and these two words in fact are meant to comprehensively cover all the favours of the Hereafter. The word فِيْ alludes to the fact they will be surrounded by the favours of the Hereafter and they will find these favours being showered on them wherever they turn to.

اٰخِذِيْنَ مَآ اٰتٰىهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَبْلَ ذٰلِكَ مُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾[15]

This is a portrayal of how these people will freely benefit from these favours. The word اٰخِذِيْنَ is an accusative of state (حال) and thus depicts the situation: at every instant, they will be receiving from their Lord what He will be blessing them with. The past tense used in مَآ اٰتٰىهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ shows that as far as blessing them is concerned, its decision and promise has already been made by the Almighty earlier on. They will not require a new decision for this; it will precisely be the time to benefit from these blessings. Whatever they desire and whenever they desire in whatever amount, they will be able to get from the unlimited treasures of their Lord. There shall be no restriction on them. They observed the restrictions which their Lord imposed on them in the previous world. In reward for this, the Almighty will allow them to freely benefit from His favours: they can use them in whatever way they like; no restriction now remains on them.

The words اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَبْلَ ذٰلِكَ مُحْسِنِيْنَ refer to the reason for granting them these great favours: these people remained among the مُحْسِنِيْنَ (*muḥsinīn*) in the previous world. I have translated in Urdu this word as *khūb kār* because it refers to people who try to follow the directives of their Lord in the most befitting and thorough way. This quality is found only in those people in whom the belief in the Hereafter has fully taken root. Such people do deeds as if they are witnessing God because they have the conviction

15. Receiving what has been blessed to them by their Lord. Indeed, they had been among the virtuous before.

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that if they are not being able to observe God, then at least God is observing them.

By using the word مُحْسِنِيْنَ (*muḥsinīn*) for the *muttaqīn* (the pious), light is shed on their inner-self: since these people fully believe in reward and punishment hence their piety is not merely a display of piety; it has the spirit of *iḥsān* (following everything in the most befitting way) in it. It has been indicated above that only this piety will be of any value before God and it is engendered from a deep grounding in the belief of reward and punishment.

كَانُوْا قَلِيْلًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾[16]

This refers to the sign of their piety and *iḥsān*: they sleep very little in the night. In other words, they do not spend the night sleeping in negligence and in indifference; they spend it while preparing for the Day of Accountability: a better part of their night is spent in prostrating and standing before their Lord and in reflection and deliberation.

This verse mentions a necessary effect of being concerned about the Hereafter. People do not go into a deep slumber; they always think that perhaps they are spending their last night in this world; for this reason their sleep is not a deep slumber. They keep getting up in the night to remember their Lord and seek His forgiveness. At another place, such people are referred to in the following words: تَتَجَافٰى جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا وَّمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ. (٣٢:١٦) (their backs stay away from their beds; they pray to their Lord in fear and hope and spend in the way of God the sustenance We have given them, (32:16)).

This sentence can be parsed in various ways; however, the meaning will be the same in all cases. One option can be: اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَلِيْلًا هُجُوْعُهُمْ (their sleeping at night would be a little). Another option can be كَانُوْا يَهْجَعُوْنَ قَلِيْلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ (little do they sleep at night). In short, as indicated above, there are many ways of grammatically parsing this sentence; however, the meaning is almost the same. Some people have interpreted this verse differently; I am afraid that their view is against linguistic principles as well as against parallel verses of the Qur'ān; hence I will not even bring it into discussion.

The word هُجُوْع means to sleep at night and it is evident from this that this is a special feature of the pious and the virtuous that they sleep very little in the night; they spend a better part of it in remembering God, asking for His forgiveness and reflecting on His signs. This is also evident from the parallel verses of the Qur'ān. Thus, for example: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ. قُمِ الَّيْلَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا (٧٣:١-٢) (O ye enfolded in the shawl! Stand by night, but a little, (73:1-2)). After this, the amount of time is also specified: نِّصْفَهٗٓ اَوِ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيْلًا. اَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْاٰنَ تَرْتِيْلًا. (٧٣:٣-٤) (half the night, or even less or a little more, (73:3-4)).

It is evident from these details that remaining awake in the night is a special sign of

16. They slept but little at night.

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the pious who befittingly worship the Almighty. It can be concluded from this that those who want to attain this status must adopt this practice. For people like us who do not have the strength to adhere to this practice in its ultimate form are provided with certain concessions which will *inshā'Allāh* come into discussion in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Muzzammil.

وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾[17]

The time just before day-break is that of dawn. Mentioned here is the objective of their awaking in the night and kneeling and prostrating before God: the last of their tasks would be that they ask for forgiveness in the early hours of dawn; they beseech God to forgive their sins when the Day of Judgement comes and as a result grant them a place in Paradise. It is evident from this that neither they expected that as reward for this practice they would be given a high status by God nor did they go after such a thing; their only desire would be that God forgoes their blemishes and mistakes. Thus their night worship would culminate in imploring the Almighty to pardon them.

It is evident from this discussion that the purpose of worship and serving God in Islam is different from that of other religions. In other religions, its purpose is divine manifestation and witnessing God and His disclosures, amalgamation in His being and other similar things. These are the objectives of the religious practices undertaken by Hindi ascetics and Christian. However, in Islam, the only purpose of worshipping and serving God is to seek His forgiveness and pleasure. If something else assumes the place of their purpose, then it carries no weight. While being influenced by Hindu philosophers, one group of our Sufis has also regarded the objective of worshipping and serving God what has just been indicated above, and for this reason their whole endeavour of self-purification has assumed an entirely different form. Here going into the details of this issue is not possible. I have explained some of its aspects in my book *Tazkiyah-e Nafs* (Purification of the Self).[18]

It is evident both from the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth that the most appropriate time for asking forgiveness from God is the last part of the night and the early hours of dawn. At that time, as is mentioned in a *qudsī* ḥadīth, the mercy of God is waiting for the seekers of forgiveness. However, only the true and earnest seekers have the courage to benefit from this time. Not every slave of his desires has the determination to spend his night kneeling and prostrating before God and then in the early morning implore Him to forgive his sins. The servants of God who show this determination actually by this very attitude show that they are sincere. For this reason, the mercy of God necessarily turns towards them. It is the sincerity of a person which attracts God's mercy. When this is present, the treasures of God's mercy abound for such a person.

17. And in the early hours of dawn sought forgiveness.

18. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tazkiyah nafs*, 4th ed. Lahore: Faran Foundation, 2005.

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وَفِيْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ ﴿١٩﴾[19]

In other words, just as these people (the *muḥsinīn*) are thorough in following God's directives and recognize their obligation towards Him, similarly they are the ones who fully carry out their obligations towards their fellow human beings. They not only acknowledge their own right in their wealth, but also of the deprived and the needy, They discharge this right the way a right should be discharged. They are not in the misconception that they are the sole owners of their wealth: they are fully aware of the fact that if the Almighty has provided them beyond their essential needs, then they have actually been entrusted with wealth that is the right of others. As a result, it must be given to its recipients. If this is not done, then it would be an outright breech and for every breech a person shall be held accountable before God.

The word مَحْرُوْمِ (*maḥrūm*) refers to every person deprived of wealth; however, it specially refers to those persons who were affluent at some time and were later on deprived of their wealth by some calamity. For such people, the Qur'ān has used the word غارمین (*ghārimīn*) and they have been included among those to whom charity can be given. Among the deprived, there are many who in spite of being needy feel very embarrassed to ask for their needs. In particular, people who have remained affluent hold their self-esteem very dear to them. Since this word is used in contrast with the word سائل (those who ask), the indication is clear that it refers to the deprived who do not even ask for their needs. To give due regard to the self-esteem of such people is a big virtue. At another place in the Qur'ān, the affluent are directed to try to reach out to such people and help them. Such people cannot be expected to come to them for their needs. In Sūrah al-Baqarah, such people are mentioned in the following words:

لِلْفُقَرَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ اُحْصِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۡ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ اَغْنِيَآءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ ۚ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ ۚ لَا يَسْـَٔلُوْنَ النَّاسَ اِلْحَافًا. (۲:۲۷۳)

This charity is for the poor who are stranded in the cause of God and are not able to travel in the land to earn their livelihood. The ignorant take them for men of wealth on account of their modest behaviour. You can recognize them by their faces – they are not annoyingly insistent in begging. (2:273)

Section III (Verses 20-23)

The succeeding verses once again take up the central theme of the *sūrah*: reward and punishment. Earlier arguments were only adduced from the effects produced by winds and clouds; here arguments are adduced from the world within man and that outside him

19. And in whose wealth the deprived and those who ask had a share.

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which can be found in every nook and corner of this universe. The only condition is that people open their eyes to see them and show conviction in the consequences of what they see.

Readers may now proceed to read these verses:

Text and Translation

وَفِي الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَفِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ۭ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَفِي السَّمَاۗءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَاۗءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَآ اَنَّكُمْ تَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾

And in the earth and yourselves also are signs for those who have conviction. Do you not see? And there is in the heavens your sustenance also and that too about which you are being threatened with. Thus, by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, this is certain to happen like the way you speak. (20-23).

Explanation

وَفِي الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾[20]

This verse is connected to the earlier ones which mention the signs of reward and punishment. The signs of the winds and the clouds belong to the ones found between the heavens and the earth. Now, in these succeeding verses, attention is being directed to the signs found in the heavens and the earth and in man himself and starting with the nearest and then going on to the next nearest, first the signs of the earth are alluded to. After that, the signs found within man and then those found in the heavens are referred to. Though the Qur'ān has adduced the basic points of its message – monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter – from these signs and details can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*; however, here, keeping in view the central theme of the *sūrah*, only the signs related to the Hereafter and to reward and punishment are alluded to. For this reason, I will confine my discussion to the arguments which substantiate reward and punishment only and just as the Qur'ān has confined itself in this regard to a hint, I too will confine myself to hints since details have already been given in the earlier *sūrahs.*

First, take a look at the following verses of Sūrah al-Nabā' in which the Qur'ān has adduced arguments from the heavens and the earth and from various objects between them in support of the Hereafter and reward and punishment:

اَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْاَرْضَ مِهٰدًا. وَّ الْجِبَالَ اَوْتَادًا. وَّ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا. وَّ جَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا. وَّ جَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا. وَّ جَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا. وَّ بَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا. وَّ جَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَّهَّاجًا. وَّ اَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرٰتِ مَآءً ثَجَّاجًا. لِّنُخْرِجَ بِهٖ حَبًّا وَّ نَبَاتًا. وَّ جَنّٰتٍ اَلْفَافًا. اِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيْقَاتًا. (٧٨:٦-١٧)

20. And in the earth are signs for those who have conviction.

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Have We not made the earth a cradle and made the mountains pegs? And not created you in pairs? And not made your sleep a means of comfort? And not made the night a covering and the day a time to earn livelihood? And not built above you seven sturdy skies? And not placed in them a glowing lamp? And not sent down abundant water from dripping clouds so that We may bring forth grain and vegetation and gardens of luxurious growth? Indeed, the Day of Judgement has an appointed time. (78:6-17)

A little deliberation will show that in these verses the Almighty through the multifarious signs of His mercy, power and providence found in the heavens and the earth and the ones found between them has substantiated the fact that this universe has not been created without a purpose; hence it is essential that a day come in which the Creator pass His judgement about the righteous and the wrongdoers. Every aspect of this argument has been explained in the previous *sūrahs*. For this reason, I will briefly allude to some signs of the earth which substantiate reward and punishment:

– Regarding the fact that the Hereafter is indeed possible, the Qur'ān has referred to the signs of the earth by drawing attention to the fact that people see around them a land which is totally barren and bare; there are absolutely no signs of life or plant-growth in any part of it when suddenly the Almighty sends forth bursting clouds and just one spell of rain enlivens and luxuriates it. They should reflect that the God Who is continuously showing them this majesty of His power, will not He be able to raise the dead to life again if He intends to?

– The various means and arrangements which the Almighty has made in this earth for the nourishment and sustenance of human beings are referred to and the question posed: Will the God Who has made such arrangements let them go scot-free and not bring a day wherein He calls to account people who used the very favours blessed by Him to rebel against Him, and not reward people who recognized their obligations towards these favours? Do they think that such a wise and noble God is a merry maker before Whom vice and virtue are the same and are they under the self-deception that these countless favours of God impose no responsibility on them?

– The Qur'ān has also directed attention to the signs and remnants of the destruction of previous nations, and has explained that they were destroyed because of their rebelliousness and arrogance against the Almighty. After they were wiped out, God preserved some signs of this demolition so that subsequent nations are afforded with an opportunity to seek this lesson: the God of this universe is not unconcerned about the good and evil which goes on in this world; He is watching all of it. So when the rebelliousness of a nation crosses the limits, it necessarily faces His law of retribution. This established practice of God about nations is clear evidence to the fact that He will bring forth a day in which His justice will manifest itself totally. The mischievous will be punished for their mischief and the righteous will be rewarded for their righteousness.

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Pointed out above are some very prominent signs found in this earth which substantiate reward and punishment. Besides these, there are others as well to which the Qur'ān has directed our attention and I have explained them in this exegesis. Recounting them here will serve to needlessly prolong this explanation.

The word لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ implies that there is no dearth of signs found in the earth. They are found at every step. The only thing that a person needs is eyes which can really see, intellect which can reflect and a heart which becomes content on the consequences of reflection and deliberation. In other words, to accept a fact it is not merely enough that arguments are present in its favour; it is also essential that there exist in the addressee the intention to reflect on these arguments and accept their consequences. If a person is devoid of this intention he can find an excuse to deny the most obvious of realities. In this world, facts were not denied merely because arguments did not exist in their favour or that people who could present them did not exist; in most cases, it was the desire of people who did not want to accept them which became a source for this rejection. No one has a remedy for this malady.

وَ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾[21]

This verse refers to the arguments found within man to substantiate the Day of Judgement. Just as the Qur'ān has presented the world around man to adduce all the basic constituents of its message, it has similarly used the world found within him to adduce them. I have been referring to these at appropriate places in this exegesis. Here I shall briefly allude to some of them which relate to reward and punishment.

– At various places, the Qur'ān has directed our attention to the process of creation: will the God Who creates a healthy human being and equips him with various abilities both internal and external after He makes a worthless fluid pass through various phases be unable to once again create man after he dies and decays and then take account of all his words and deeds? When creating him the first time was not impossible for Him, how can creating him the second time become impossible for Him? In this regard, it is also indicated that each person everyday observes in himself the phenomena of life, death, *barzakh* and being raised to life after death only if he reflects on these observations and does not let them go by without deliberation.

– The faculties of intellect, understanding and knowledge the Almighty has blessed man with as well as with certain other innate abilities and skills show that man like other creatures of this world is not merely a creature of this world; he has a higher status. He has been entrusted with the freedom to exercise his will in a certain sphere of authority. It is because of this that the Almighty has bestowed on him the status of being his vicegerent. It is an essential requirement of this trust and vicegerency that he one day be brought forth before His Lord so that those who have fulfilled their

21. And yourselves also. Do you not see?

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obligations towards this trust and vicegerency receive its eternal reward and those who adopted a rebellious attitude after being blessed with this trust and vicegerency undergo its punishment. In other words, reward and punishment is an essential requirement of man being installed on the status of vicegerency. This argument is stated in the Qur'ān also and Jesus (sws) too has delineated it in beautiful parables.

– The third important reality which has been specially elaborated upon in Sūrah al-Qiyāmah is that the Almighty has placed a reproaching soul in man which rebukes him whenever he commits an evil. An oath is sworn in that *sūrah* by the reproaching soul to bear witness to the reward and punishment: had not man's Creator intended to reward piety and punish sin, why would He have placed this reproaching soul in a person which keeps pricking his conscience. Its existence is meant to place on a lesser scale the mechanism of accountability which will one day manifest itself for all mankind so that this keeps reminding a person that the God Who has created him is not unconcerned about the good and evil which emanates from him; on the contrary, He will reward and punish people for such acts. It is as if this miniature court of justice found in every human being is a reminder of that greater court of justice which will be set up on the Day of Judgement. For this very reason, a human being is called a miniature world because in him is found a reflection of this whole world.

In Sūrah al-Qiyāmah, it is stated that each person finds an evidence of reward and punishment in his own self even though he may invent many excuses for it: بَلِ الْاِنْسَانُ عَلٰی نَفْسِهٖ بَصِیْرَةٌ.وَّلَوْ اَلْقٰی مَعَاذِیْرَهٗ (۷۵:۱۴-۱۵) (in fact, he himself is a witness upon his own-self however much he may put up excuses, (75:14-15)). Similarly, it is also stated in that *sūrah*: بَلْ یُرِیْدُ الْاِنْسَانُ لِیَفْجُرَ اَمَامَهٗ (۷۵:۵) (in fact, man wants to be mischievous before his [conscience], 75:5)). The reason is the same as what I have indicated earlier: a miniature court of justice from God is present in a person's conscience. For this reason, any person who commits a sin does so before this court and this is indeed open audaciousness on his part.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that a person's reproaching soul will continue with its task of alerting him as long as a person does not kill it by defying its calls. I have delineated this practice of the Almighty at an appropriate place in this exegesis.

Since a person's soul is the closest to him, the words وَ فِیْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ state that why is it that he is not being able to see such near at hand signs?. Though the boundaries of the earth are beyond him and so are the heavens, is his soul also beyond his reach that he is unable to peep into it and observe its signs?

وَ فِی السَّمَآءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَ مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾[22]

Now attention is directed at the signs found in the sky: within it is their sustenance as well as the punishment they are being threatened with. By sustenance here is meant

22. And there is in the heavens your sustenance also and that too about which you are being threatened with.

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rain which becomes a source of sustenance. It is very common in Arabic to state the effect while referring to its cause. The words وَمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ, as alluded to earlier, refer to the punishment with which people were threatened with if they denied the Prophet (sws). Examples of such a punishment are found in history, and some of them will be referred to further ahead in the *sūrah*.

The implication of the verse is that every now and then the sky bears witness to reward and punishment. From it, the Almighty rains down their sustenance and from it He also unleashes His punishment for those who are rebellious and disobedient. He does not need to make any extra effort to shower His mercy nor any extra effort to let loose His torment. So if they are continuously witnessing this majesty and grandeur from Him, why do they think that it is not possible for Him to make the very source of life for them into a means of their destruction if He intends so? Moreover, after observing this majesty and grandeur of His, why do not they believe that He is unconcerned or unbiased about the good and evil which is taking place around them? The fact of the matter is that He will necessarily punish the evil-doers and reward the righteous.

فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَآ اَنَّكُمْ تَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾[23]

This verse refers to all the signs and an oath is sworn by the Lord of the sky and the earth on the fact that the Day of Judgement they are being reminded of and the consequences of the rejection of the Prophet (sws) they are being threatened with are certain to happen. It would not be difficult at all for God to do this. Just as it is very easy for a person to utter a word from his tongue, similarly, it is very easy for God to bring about all this. All He needs to do it is to say "let it be."

The antecedent of the pronoun in اِنَّهٗ is the complement of oath which was stated earlier viz: اِنَّمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَصَادِقٌ.وَّ اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ لَوَاقِعٌ (٥-٦). Since this has already been mentioned, a pronoun was enough to refer to it.

At first, after referring to the signs found in the earth and the sky an oath is sworn by them and then the same is repeated by swearing by the Lord of the sky and the earth. It is evident from this style that just as a creation reflects the temperament of its creator, in a similar manner, the signs of the sky and the earth throw light on the attributes of God viz: He will reward and punish people. Had this not been the case, why would this become evident from the sky and the earth He has created?

The word حَقٌّ in اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَآ اَنَّكُمْ تَنْطِقُوْنَ refers to two meanings at the same time: firstly, reward and punishment is a reality in which there is no element of any doubt; secondly, it is certain to happen and no one should regard it improbable as far as its happening is concerned. When the time of its advent arrives, the Almighty will unveil

23. Thus, by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, this is certain to happen the way you speak.

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it in the blink of an eye. That it is a reality has become evident from the arguments stated above. Here its happening is explained through a parable: bringing it about is not the least of a bother for the Lord of the heavens and the earth. When He had no difficulty in creating them the first time, why would it be difficult for Him to recreate people to hold them accountable for their deeds? Just as it is easy for a person to utter a word, in a similar way, it is easy for God to accomplish the greatest of tasks. He does not have to make preparations or arrange for the means to do a task. He does every task in the blink of an eye by merely uttering the word *kun* (be). This subject is discussed at various places in the Qur'ān:

اِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَیْءٍ اِذَآ اَرَدْنٰهُ اَنْ نَّقُوْلَ لَهٗ كُنْ فَیَكُوْنُ. (١٦:٤٠)

When We intend to do a thing, We need only say: "Be," and it is. (16:40)

At another place, the words are:

اَوَلَیْسَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِقٰدِرٍ عَلٰۤی اَنْ یَّخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ ؕ بَلٰی ۗ وَهُوَ الْخَلّٰقُ الْعَلِیْمُ. اِنَّمَاۤ اَمْرُهٗۤ اِذَاۤ اَرَادَ شَیْـًٔا اَنْ یَّقُوْلَ لَهٗ كُنْ فَیَكُوْنُ. (٣٦:٨٠-٨٢)

Has He who created the heavens and earth no power to create like them? Yes! He surely is. He is the all-knowing and the Creator of all. Such is the matter of His power that when He decides to undertake a task, He says: "Be," and it is done. (36:80-82)

At some places, it is also said that recreating this world is easier for God than creating it for the first time:

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ یَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ یُعِیْدُهٗ وَهُوَ اَهْوَنُ عَلَیْهِ (٣٠:٢٧)

And He it is Who begins Creation; then He will do it again and this is even more easier for Him. (30:27)

It should remain in consideration that this parable is merely meant to make us understand. For in reality, it is much easier for the Almighty to create the whole universe than it is for us to even utter a word. We need a number of means and systems given to us by God to utter a word. On the contrary, God needs none of these. Similarly, at some places the words كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ (in the blink of an eye) are used in the Qur'ān as in: وَمَاۤ اَمْرُنَاۤ اِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ (٥٤:٥٠) (and Our directive will be fulfilled in the blink of an eye, (54:50)). This too is a parable which informs us about His absolute authority. About such parables and similes, readers must always keep in mind what is mentioned in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān.[24]

24. Reference is to the following verses:

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Here an important point mentioned by my mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī is worthy of consideration. While delineating the sequence and mutual relationship between the signs of the earth, sky and the world within man, he writes:[25]

> The beautiful sequence found in this comprehensive discourse and the principle of "the nearest to the next nearest" found in it become very evident from the earlier discussion. However, a further deliberation will reveal another subtle point.
>
> In this paragraph, first the earth is mentioned from the words وَفِي الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ to وَمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ. After that, man himself is referred to and then the sky. A little reflection shows that man lies between the earth and the sky and has two aspects: material and spiritual. From one of these, he is inclined towards the earth and from the other towards the sky. After that, the signs found in all three of them are alluded to. Then the words فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ (thus, by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, this is certain) unveil a comprehensive argument which is the real argument which substantiates man being raised up again and reward and punishment. This argument is then further strengthened by the parable of مِّثْلَ مَآ اَنَّكُمْ تَنْطِقُوْنَ (the way you speak) and this parable itself emanates from man who is a small world in himself and as such a mirror to all sky and the earth and this is if the earlier verse وَفِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ۭ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ is referred to.

Section III: Verses (24-46)

In the succeeding verses, the Qur'ān has presented historical evidence on the claims that are mentioned earlier. This is a very common stylistic feature of the Qur'ān that besides drawing testimonies from the world found within man and from his intellect, it also presents testimonies from history. The purpose is to explain everything fully before the addressees, and if there is even a slight chance that hearts of people can be

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هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْهُ اٰيٰتٌ مُّحْكَمٰتٌ هُنَّ اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ وَاُخَرُ مُتَشٰبِهٰتٌ ۭ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُوْنَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاۗءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاۗءَ تَاْوِيْلِهٖ ۚ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَاْوِيْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۘ وَالرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ۙ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ۚ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ اِلَّآ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ. (۷:۳)

It is He who has revealed to you the Book. Some of its verses are *muḥkam* – they are the foundation of the Book – and others *mutashābih*. Then those whose hearts are warped go after the *mutashābih* among them in order to create dissension and in order to know their reality even though no one except God knows their reality. And those who are well-grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in them: all this has come from our Lord." And only men of understanding take heed from them. (3:7)

25. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 119.

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influenced, then they are given the opportunity to learn a lesson.

A little deliberation on these incidents shows that there are three aspects which are kept in consideration in them:

Firstly, winds and clouds had a special role in the destruction of nations mentioned here. Viewed thus, these incidents are a substantiation of the oaths sworn above.

Secondly, both aspects of the result are evident in these incidents: mercy as well as wrath. The same thing which at the behest of the Almighty became a means of protection for one nation became a means of punishment for another.

Thirdly, God's power is immense. However much a nation be powerful but when God intends to destroy it, He can do it in the blink of any eye.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to read the verses given below:

Text and Translation

هَلْ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيْثُ ضَيْفِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الْمُكْرَمِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ اِذْ دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ سَلٰمٌ ۚ قَوْمٌ مُّنْكَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَرَاغَ
اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ فَجَآءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِيْنٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَقَرَّبَهٗٓ اِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ اَلَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَاَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيْفَةً ؕ قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ ؕ وَبَشَّرُوْهُ
بِغُلٰمٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَاَقْبَلَتِ امْرَاَتُهٗ فِىْ صَرَّةٍ فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ عَجُوْزٌ عَقِيْمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ قَالُوْا كَذٰلِكِ ۙ قَالَ رَبُّكِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ
الْحَكِيْمُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ اَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّآ اُرْسِلْنَآ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ لِنُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ
حِجَارَةً مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ مُّسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ فَاَخْرَجْنَا مَنْ كَانَ فِيْهَا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيْهَا
غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا فِيْهَآ اٰيَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَفِىْ مُوْسٰٓى اِذْ اَرْسَلْنٰهُ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ
بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَتَوَلّٰى بِرُكْنِهٖ وَقَالَ سٰحِرٌ اَوْ مَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ فَاَخَذْنٰهُ وَجُنُوْدَهٗ فَنَبَذْنٰهُمْ فِى الْيَمِّ وَهُوَ مُلِيْمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَفِىْ
عَادٍ اِذْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيْحَ الْعَقِيْمَ ﴿٤١﴾ مَا تَذَرُ مِنْ شَىْءٍ اَتَتْ عَلَيْهِ اِلَّا جَعَلَتْهُ كَالرَّمِيْمِ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَفِىْ ثَمُوْدَ اِذْ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ
تَمَتَّعُوْا حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَعَتَوْا عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوْا مِنْ قِيَامٍ وَّمَا كَانُوْا
مُنْتَصِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾

Has the account of the honoured guests of Abraham reached you? When they came to him, they said: "Peace be on you!" "Peace be on you too," he answered, [and thought] these folks seem to be strangers. He then hastened secretively to his family and brought for them some roasted meat of a fatted calf and placed it before them. Then he said: "Why are you people not eating?" So he felt a kind of fear from them. "Fear not," said they to him and gave him glad tidings of a son blessed with knowledge. Then his wife, bewildered, came forward, smote her forehead, and cried: "Will now a barren old woman produce a child?" "Thus says your Lord," they replied. He is All-Wise and All-Knowing. He asked: "O Messengers! What at present is your mission?" They replied: "We have been sent to a sinful people so that we may hurl upon them stones of clay, marked by your Lord for those who exceed the limits."

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Then We evacuated from therein all the believers and found there but one house of those who were Muslims, and We left in it a great sign for those who fear a grievous penalty. (24-37)

And in the account of Moses also is a sign when We sent him forth to Pharaoh with an authority manifest. So, he turned his back in arrogance of his might and cried: "He is a sorcerer or one possessed." We then seized him and his forces, and threw them into the sea, and for this, he himself was worthy of blame. (38-40)

And in the account of the 'Ād too there is a sign, when We unleashed on them a devastating dry wind; it reduced to powder everything over which it swept. (41-42)

And in the account of the Thamūd also there is a lesson when it was said to them: "Enjoy yourselves for a while." So they rebelliously defied the command of their Lord and they were struck by a thunder bolt whilst they looked on. Then they were neither able to get up nor could they save themselves. (43-45)

And before this, We seized the folks of Noah too. They were also a disobedient people. (46)

Explanation

هَلْ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيْثُ ضَيْفِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الْمُكْرَمِيْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾[26]

Under an earlier verse: وَ فِی السَّمَآءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَ مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ, I have indicated that mercy and torment both are in the authority of God. He can make a thing a mercy for whomsoever He intends and make the same thing a torment for whomsoever He intends. Rain falling from the heavens is a great mercy of the Almighty; however, whenever God wants, He can make it a punishment.

To delineate this reality, in the succeeding verses, historical episodes are cited beginning with those of Abraham (sws) and Lot (sws). In them, before depicting the fate of the people of Lot (sws), it is shown that the very angels who brought God's wrath on them had earlier gone to Abraham (sws) to give him glad tidings of a knowledgeable son.

It is not necessary that the address هَلْ اَتٰىكَ be directed at the Prophet (sws); in fact, it is more probable that it be directed to the rejecters who are being conclusively conveyed the truth in this *sūrah*. When a group is addressed in the singular, the purpose, as has been explained at a number of places in this exegesis, is to focus the attention of each member of the group individually. The interrogative style adopted in itself shows that what is being said is of importance; everyone should intently hear it out.

The word ضَيْفٌ is used for both singular and plural entities. Thus here it is qualified by the adjective مُكْرَمِيْنَ. This word refers to the hospitality, warmth and kindness shown by Abraham (sws) as well as the elaborate arrangements made by him in

26. Has the account of the honoured guests of Abraham reached you?

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dealing with his guests. This attitude of Abraham (sws) bears witness to the fact that the decency and civility of the guests was reflected from their faces. It did not need to be divulged. Thus, in spite of not knowing them, Abraham (sws) set about to welcome them in a befitting manner and with great urgency prepared what best he could have to serve them as a meal. However, when these very guests reached Lot (sws), his nation showed great indecency to them and in order to save their honour, Lot (sws) himself had to put his own honour at stake. At last, these guests had to unveil their reality before these wretched people and became instrumental in destroying the whole nation.

اِذْ دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ سَلٰمٌ ۚ قَوْمٌ مُّنْكَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾[27]

The implication of the verse is that these guests paid their salutations to Abraham (sws) the way righteous people do and Abraham (sws) too replied to them. These salutations to some extent dispelled them as strangers before Abraham (sws) and he was assured that they are decent and virtuous guests. However, the question of their identity, their origin and purpose of visit did arise in his mind, for to him they were complete strangers.

The words قَوْمٌ مُّنْكَرُوْنَ were uttered in his heart and not by his tongue. The reason that this question arose in his mind must have been that in the first place they were very few righteous people in that area and whoever such people were there were associated and linked closely to Abraham (sws). For this reason, he expressed wonder that in this age when decenct people are found few and far between, where did such civilized and upright people come from.

It needs to be kept in consideration that just as the word قَالَ denotes what is said by the tongue, it also denotes what is said in the heart. Examples of this usage are found in classical Arabic poetry as well as in the Qur'ān itself – some of which can be seen in the preceding *sūrahs* and some others in the succeeding ones. He responded to the salutations of the guests by the tongue; however, what is stated here in this part of the verse was said by him in his heart because this is something which is not appropriate for uttering by the tongue.

فَرَاغَ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ فَجَآءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِيْنٍ ﴿۲۶﴾[28]

The word روغ means to do something secretively and furtively. As soon as Abraham (sws) saw his guests, he furtively crept to his house so that he could arrange something to eat for them. This was done furtively by him so that it would not be a burden on the guests. This is what hosts who are noble and generous do: they are hospitable to their

27. When they came to him, they said: "Peace be on you!" "Peace be on you too," he answered, [and thought] these folks seem to be strangers.

28. He then hastened secretively to his family and brought for them some roasted meat of a fatted calf.

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guests such that the guests do not feel uncomfortable.

The words فَجَآءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِيْنٍ refer to the fact that Abraham (sws) slaughtered a fat calf and presented its cooked meat for consumption before his guests. The words عِجْلٍ سَمِيْنٍ express the generosity of Abraham (sws): he slaughtered a whole calf for his guests. This does not necessarily imply that he presented all the meat before them. At times, a part is signified by stating the whole. Just as this style exists in every language, it also exists in Arabic.

فَقَرَّبَهٗٓ اِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ اَلَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾[29]

Certain words towards which concomitant factors point are suppressed in this sentence. The whole discourse is something to the effect: the guests were presented with a sumptuous meal; however, when Abraham saw that the guests were not eating it, he very affectionately asked them to eat it. At some other instances, the Qur'ān has revealed this suppression.

فَاَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيْفَةً ؕ قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ ؕ وَبَشَّرُوْهُ بِغُلٰمٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿۲۸﴾[30]

When the guests did not eat the meal presented to them, this naturally increased in the mind of Abraham (sws) the alien element he had initially felt from them. He felt fear in his heart. It is hinted in Sūrah Hūd that this fear was caused because his guests had refrained from eating: فَلَمَّا رَآٰ اَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ اِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَاَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيْفَةً (۷۰:۱۱) (but when he saw their hands being withheld from food, he thought of them as strangers and was afraid of them in his heart, (11:70)).

It seems as if Abraham (sws) was alarmed at this attitude from his guests that they were not human beings the way people have thought; they are in fact angels. It is commonly known that angels do not eat – something which could not have been unknown to as celebrated a prophet as Abraham (sws). It would also have been in his knowledge that when angels come, they have some important errand before them. Moreover, the moral anarchy of the people of Lot (sws) had reached its pinnacle in a nearby land as a result of which it was continuously under the threat of divine punishment. In these circumstances, it was not improbable at all that Abraham (sws) feared that their time had come. His hesitancy was detected by the angels and they assured him to remain calm and in order to comfort him further gave him glad tidings of a knowledgeable son. This was great news for it was not merely news of a son; it was news of a knowledgeable son. Hidden in these words were the glad tidings that the son would be a prophet. After receiving this news, Abraham (sws) felt assured regarding his own self; however, he still had a question in mind as regards the

29. And placed it before them. Then he said: "Why are you people not eating?"

30. So he felt a kind of fear from them. "Fear not," said they to him and gave him glad tidings of a son blessed with knowledge.

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campaign at hand of the angels. This he expressed later; details will shortly follow.

فَاَقْبَلَتِ امْرَاَتُهٗ فِيْ صَرَّةٍ فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ عَجُوْزٌ عَقِيْمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾[31]

The glad tidings mentioned above were given to Abraham in a loud voice; for this reason, his wife Sarah who was standing nearby was able to hear them. Who can imagine the amount of her happiness and amazement. Thus as she soon as heard them, she expressed wonder in a typical lady-like style by striking her forehead and said that she was a barren old lady and how could she give birth to a child in this age and situation. The extent of amazement, elation and further substantiation of these glad tidings reflected in each and every word of Sarah sentence requires no explanation.

The word فِيْ صَرَّةٍ refers to the fact that she came forward in a state of astonishment and wonder. There is an Arabic idiom صَرَّ الفَرَسُ أُذُنَيْهِ which means that the horse raised his ears.[32] From this very idiom has sprung another idiom فِيْ صَرَّةٍ which is used to express surprise and incredulity.[33]

The words فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا refer to the fact that she struck her forehead. This is a very typical way adopted by women to express wonder. Their utter surprise is often shown by saying something while striking their forehead. In these two words, the Qur'ān has portrayed her complete state of astonishment.

قَالُوْا كَذٰلِكِ ۙ قَالَ رَبُّكِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٠﴾[34]

The angels replied that she should rest assured for thus has his Lord bidden, and when He has bade something, it shall necessarily be fulfilled; neither her state of being a barren old lady will be any cause of hindrance nor her husband's old age. God is all-knowing and all-wise. His knowledge and wisdom is all-embracing. All means have been created by Him and are subservient to Him; whenever He wants, He will use them for His purpose.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ اَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[35]

When Abraham (sws) became assured about himself and also came to know that his guests were in fact angels, he inquired from them about their immediate assignment. He posed this question to them because, as indicated earlier, he was ware of the fact that when angels come in this manner, they have some big mission before them. If the

31. Then his wife, bewildered, came forward, smote her forehead, and cried: "Will now a barren old woman produce a child?"

32. Ibn Man ẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 4, 452.

33. Ibid., vol. 4, 451.

34. "Thus says your Lord," they replied. He is All-Wise and All-Knowing.

35. He asked: "O Messengers! What at present is your mission?"

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issue was mere communication of glad tidings of a son, it would not have required this elaborate arrangement. The word خَطْبٌ is used in Arabic only for some big and important matter. Since Abraham (sws) already had some fear regarding the people of Lot (sws), he wanted to find out if this was their mission. In particular, he was very concerned about what would happen to Lot (sws), his family and his companions. Thus, at another instance in the Qur'ān, it is stated that when it became evident to Abraham (sws) that a decision had been made to punish the people of Lot (sws), he argued with God about the believers among them. God has praised this argument and has presented it as a testimony of the sympathy and concern found in him.

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّآ اُرْسِلْنَآ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ۙ﴿۳۳﴾[36]

The angels replied that they had been sent to a nation of sinners. Here it seems that they did not name the people of Lot; however, the words in Sūrah Hūd are: قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ اِنَّآ اُرْسِلْنَآ اِلٰى قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ (۷۰:۱۱) (they said: "have no fear; we are sent forth to the people of Lot," (11:70)). By reading both these verses together, one can conclude that the angels mentioned them both by their character and by their name. This was because it becomes evident to Abraham (sws) that the people of Lot (sws) had become worthy of punishment but the Qur'ān, on account of eloquence, has suppressed their name and only referred to them as a nation of sinners. The reason is that it becomes evident that the punishment with which the nation of Lot (sws) faced was because of their own deeds. It needs to be kept in consideration that this is the central theme of the *sūrah* as well.

لِنُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ۙ﴿۳۴﴾ مُّسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾[37]

The angels express in these verses the purpose of their advent: to shower pebbles on these sinners. The preposition عَلَى here is testimony to the fact that such will be this onslaught that it will completely rout them.

The words حِجَارَةً مِّنْ طِيْنٍ refer to the pebbles which become stones of mud. The Qur'ān has also used the word سِجِّيْل for it. Thus the words in Sūrah Hūd are: وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ ۙ مَّنْضُوْدٍ. (۸۲:۱۱) (and We let loose upon it a shower of clay-stone, (11:82)). The word سنگ گل is actually an arabacized form of the Persian word سِجِّيْل. Here the words حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ explain their composition.

The word مُسَوَّمَةً means "marked." It is an accusative of state from حِجَارَةً. In other words, as per the scheme of God, these stones had been marked for the purpose of being used solely for the mischievous elements of the people of Lot (sws). Today

36. They replied: "We have been sent to a sinful people."

37. "So that we may hurl upon them stones of clay, marked by your Lord for those who exceed the limits."

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wherever roads are built from pebbles, one can see the workmen stacking bricks and marking them which means that they belong to the state. In other words, no one should be misled by that fact that how can so many pebbles be arranged which destroy a whole nation. They have been piled up and also bear divinely marked signs showing that they have a specific purpose and that no other person should touch them. In Sūrah Hūd, it is further pointed out: وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِبَعِيْدٍ. (۸۳:۱۱) (and these stones are not far off from these unjust people, (11:83)). This indicates the fact that from the very earth they roam about, in fact from below their very feet a divinely assigned wind will pick them up and shower them on these people.

The word لِلْمُسْرِفِيْنَ refers to the miscreants among the nation of Lot (sws). The word اِسْراف means to exceed the bounds set by God. It has been used in the Qur'ān for both small and big excesses. Here it refers to the indecent behaviour of the nation of Lot (sws) with which it was afflicted as a nation. A nation which openly and blatantly violates the bounds set by God faces any of the elements which have been put to their service by God. He unleashes these elements which then rout and ravage these people because of their rebelliousness.

فَاَخْرَجْنَا مَنْ كَانَ فِيْهَا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾ فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيْهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا فِيْهَآ اٰيَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿۳۷﴾[38]

The conversation of the angels ended in the previous verse. From here God resumes His narration of the rest of the anecdote beginning with what He did with them after that: before sending punishment to them, He evacuated all the believers from it. The antecedent of the pronoun in فِيْهَا is the land of the people of Lot. Since all these examples are being cited under وَ فِي الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ the pronoun has come without an antecedent. Such an occurrence of a pronoun in the presence of some contextual indication is very common in Arabic. Several examples can be seen of this usage in previous *sūrahs*.

God has mentioned in these verses an established practice of His which has been referred to several times in this exegesis: when decisive punishment is meted out to a nation to which the truth has been conclusively been delivered by a messenger of God, those who have professed faith in the messenger before the advent of this punishment are saved. This established practice of God has been explained in the accounts of the messengers. About the people of Lot (sws), it is mentioned at one instance that he, his family and his followers were directed to leave the place destined for punishment before dawn, and leave it in a manner that they should not even look back.

The verse فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيْهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ refers to the fact that in that area except for one

38. Then We evacuated from therein all the believers and found there but one house of those who were Muslims, and We left in it a great sign for those who fear a grievous penalty.

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family, there was no other house of Muslims. Obviously, this family belonged to Lot (sws) and in it too, as the Qur'ān has specified, his wife had been isolated because all her sympathies instead of being with Lot (sws) were with his nation.

By this special reference of the Qur'ān to this lack of existence of believers among the nation of Lot (sws), it becomes evident that the Almighty does not send His decisive punishment on a nation unless the whole of a nation has become morally corrupt. Believers either become non-existent among it or are in such small numbers that they can be regarded as virtually non-existent. The argument of Abraham (sws) with God as recorded in the Qur'ān also points to this and the attributes of mercy and justice of God also entail it.

Here, a special aspect needs to be considered: the above verse mentions the word مُؤْمِنِيْنَ (believers) and the current one mentions the word مُسْلِمِيْنَ (Muslims). The reason for this is that the previous verse mentions the practice of God regarding salvation from divine punishment, and as per this practice, only true believers are protected from such punishment. In the verse under discussion, it is stated that except for one family there was no other Muslim family in that area. The word الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ used for this family has a lot of scope in it. It can cover the weak in faith and the strong in faith as well as the mature and the immature. So much so, in the apparent sense, even the wife of the Prophet Lot (sws) was included in it but was excluded from it when the final time arrived.

The verse وَتَرَكْنَا فِيْهَآ اٰيَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ refers to the fact that the Almighty left an obvious and exemplary sign in the city of the nation of Lot (sws) for people who want to witness the signs of wrath of God in this earth and want to seek a lesson from it. Here readers may once again refresh the following earlier verse in their minds: وَفِى الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ (٢٠) (and in the earth and yourselves also are signs for those who have conviction, (20)). The verse under discussion presents a testimony of what is claimed in verse 20. I have already explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥijr that Sodom and Gomorrah which were the settlements of the nation of Lot were situated on the route between Ḥijāz and Syria. Trade caravans of the Quraysh often passed on this route. The implication is that if even after witnessing these signs and remnants they are rejecting the warnings of the Prophet it only means that these people will profess faith when the promised calamity will waylay them.

Here, a brief explanation of the nature of the pebble-hurling storm referred to in verse 33 is in order. This will elucidate that the relationship between the oaths sworn at the beginning of the *sūrah* by dust-laden wind and by striped clouds and between this anecdote becomes evident.

My mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has dealt in detail with the nature of this punishment in his exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt. He himself has summed it up later as well in the following words:

The Almighty unleashed a dust-laden storm on the people of Lot (sws) which

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finally took the shape of a stone hurling wind. This at first rained down pebbles and stones on them and later when the storm picked up, it destroyed all the houses. While referring to the people of Lot (sws), it is stated: فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا. (٤٠:٢٩) (on some We sent down a violent stone-hurling wind, (29:40)). At another instance the words used about them are: فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ. (٧٤:١٥) (We razed their city to the ground and let loose a shower of clay-stones upon them, (15:74)). In other words, such was the nature of this strong wind that the houses and roofs were razed to ground and the pebbles and stones completely covered them. At another place, the words are: وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ اَهْوٰى. فَغَشّٰهَا مَا غَشّٰى. (٥٤-٥٣:٥٣) (and overthrew the overthrown cities; thus there covered them that which did cover them, (53:53-54)).[39]

In the end, after critiquing the statement of the Torah regarding the punishment meted out to the People of Lot (sws), he has summarized the whole discussion in the following words:

It is evident from this that the Almighty sent upon them the punishment of a stone-hurling windstorm which covered them as well as their dwellings. If the statement of the Torah in this regard is also accepted, it will become further evident that besides this stone-hurling windstorm, they also faced the punishment of lightning and thunder.[40]

In the light of these details, it can be seen that in the anecdote of Lot's people both types of testimonies are present to which the oaths stated earlier in the *sūrah* allude; in other words, the effects of the dust-laden wind as well as the striped winter clouds both played their role.

The incident of the people of Lot is also mentioned in Sūrah Hūd and Sūrah al-Ḥijr. For more details, they can be consulted. *Inshā'Allāh*, every aspect shall become evident.

وَفِيْ مُوْسٰٓى اِذْ اَرْسَلْنٰهُ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٨﴾[41]

This verse is actually connected to the account of Abraham (sws). In other words, just as there are signs of God's help and His justice and revenge in the account of Abraham (sws), these signs are also present in the account of Moses (sws).

Research on the word سُلْطَانٌ has already been presented at an appropriate place in this exegesis. It is used in the meaning of "a clear sanction" as well as of "awe and

39. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 129.

40. Ibid., 131.

41. And in the account of Moses also is a sign when We sent him forth to Pharaoh with an authority manifest.

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respect." Here, it is used in both these meanings. The signs shown by Moses (sws) were sanctioned by God; The Pharaoh merely because of his arrogance regarded them to be magic even though he knew that they were miracles from God. It is for this very reason that after witnessing them, the Pharaoh and his followers were so awe-inspired by Moses (sws) that in spite of their frenzy for revenge they, till the very end, did not dares to harm him.

فَتَوَلّٰى بِرُكْنِهٖ وَقَالَ سٰحِرٌ اَوْ مَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿٣٩﴾[42]

The word رُكْنٌ means "shoulder" and the letter ب transforms the verb into a transitive one. When a person evades someone because of arrogance, he turns his face by jerking his shoulder. Thus this expression would mean that "he turned his face in arrogance." This style is found in the Qur'ān at various places. For example:

وَاِذَآ اَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْاِنْسَانِ اَعْرَضَ وَنَاٰ بِجَانِبِهٖ. (۱۷:۸۳)

When We bestow favours on man, he starts to evade and turns his head in arrogance. (17:83)

In Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22:9 this arrogant evasion is termed as: ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهٖ (۲۲:۹) (turning away in scorn, (22:9)).

The words وَ قَالَ سٰحِرٌ اَوْ مَجْنُوْنٌ indicate that at times, Moses (sws) was regarded as a magician and at times a madman: when they saw his miracles, they called him a magician and when they heard his calls to faith, they dubbed him a mad person for he was claiming himself to be a Messenger of a God he had never seen.

فَاَخَذْنٰهُ وَجُنُوْدَهٗ فَنَبَذْنٰهُمْ فِى الْيَمِّ وَهُوَ مُلِيْمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾[43]

At that very time, God seized him and his armies and threw them in the sea. Armies are mentioned here to point to the reason of his arrogance. It was his reliance and trust on them that made him haughty. The details of the way in which the Pharaoh and his armies were drowned have already been mentioned in previous *sūrahs*. Here, in this verse, the way their fate is described shows that their status was no more than that of a handful of dust or ashes; so the Almighty got hold of it and strewed it in the sea. This is a portrayal of the extreme and boundless power of the Almighty that the greatest manifestation of arrogance of an arrogant person is no more than a handful of hay.

The words وَ هُوَ مُلِيْمٌ refer to the fact that the Pharaoh himself was to blame for this

42. So, he turned his back in arrogance of his might and cried: "He is a sorcerer or one possessed."

43. We then seized him and his forces, and threw them into the sea, and for this, he himself was worthy of blame.

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fate; no other person was responsible for it. The Almighty fully informed him of good and evil through His messenger but arrogance had got the better of his senses and intellect so much that he never got ready to reflect on this and he led his whole nation to ruin.

Here, the details of destruction through drowning of the Pharaoh and his armies are not mentioned; however, it is evident from other verses of the Qur'ān and from the Torah that it too was because of wind. My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī after dwelling in detail on the whole incident has summarized the whole discussion in the following words:

> The strange manifestations of winds which came into play with regard to this incident to which the Qur'ān has made a passing reference is alluded to in the Torah in the following words:
>
> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided. (Exodus 14:21)
>
> This eastern storm blew all night and ceased in the morning. Wind pressure forced water into Suez canal in the west leaving the eastern canal – the 'Aqabah canal dry. When the storm ceased, water spread at its place and the army which was chasing Moses (sws) was drowned. This is indicated by the Qur'ān as well. It is mentioned in Sūrah al-Dukhān:

فَاَسۡرِ بِعِبَادِیۡ لَیۡلًا اِنَّکُمۡ مُّتَّبَعُوۡنَ. وَاتۡرُکِ الۡبَحۡرَ رَهۡوًا ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ جُنۡدٌ مُّغۡرَقُوۡنَ. (٤٤: ٢٣-٢٤)

And take with you My servants by night and be informed that you shall be pursued. And leave still the sea. Indeed, they are an army to be drowned. (44:23-24)

The word رهو means "still and calm" and obviously a sea can be calm when the wind becomes calm. In Sūrah Ṭāha, the words are:

وَلَقَدۡ اَوۡحَیۡنَاۤ اِلٰی مُوۡسٰۤی ۙ اَنۡ اَسۡرِ بِعِبَادِیۡ فَاضۡرِبۡ لَهُمۡ طَرِیۡقًا فِی الۡبَحۡرِ یَبَسًا ۙ لَّا تَخٰفُ دَرَکًا وَّلَا تَخۡشٰی. فَاَتۡبَعَهُمۡ فِرۡعَوۡنُ بِجُنُوۡدِهٖ فَغَشِیَهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡیَمِّ مَا غَشِیَهُمۡ. (٢٠: ٧٧-٧٨)

Then We directed Moses saying: "Take with you My servants in the night and strike for them a dry path across the sea. Neither will you have fear of being overtaken nor any worry of drowning." So the Pharaoh went in their pursuit with his armies, but covered them from the sea that which covered them. (20:77-78)

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In Exodus the song of the praise is recorded thus:

But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead, in the mighty waters. (15:10)

In Deuteronomy, the words are:

What he did to the Egyptian army, to its horses and chariots, how he overwhelmed them with the waters of the Red Sea as they were pursuing you, and how the LORD brought lasting ruin on them. (11:4)

The summary of all these details is that the Almighty saved Moses (sws) by a strong wind and destroyed the Pharaoh and his armies through a soft wind; in other words, mercy and punishment of God both manifested themselves through the effects of the wind.[44]

The anecdote of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh is a very prominent example of the reward and punishment to which the testimony of the winds was presented in the beginning of the *sūrah*. It also is among the signs referred to by the verse: وَفِي الْاَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ (٢٠) (and in the earth and yourselves also are signs for those who have conviction, (20)).

وَفِيْ عَادٍ اِذْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيْحَ الْعَقِيْمَ ۝٤١[45]

The fate of the people of 'Ād is alluded to: for those who can seek a lesson, there is a lot that can be gauged from their account when the Almighty unleashed on them a barren wind. The expression الرِّيْحَ الْعَقِيْمَ refers to a wind which produces no benefits neither rain nor any other. In Arabic, winds which produce rain are called لَوَاقِح (those which bear benefit), and those which produce no benefit are called عَقِيْمَ (barren) as in: فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا صَرْصَرًا فِيْٓ اَيَّامٍ نَّحِسَاتٍ. (٤١:١٦) (So, over a few ill-omened days We let loose on them a howling gale, (41:16)).

مَا تَذَرُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ اَتَتْ عَلَيْهِ اِلَّا جَعَلَتْهُ كَالرَّمِيْمِ ۝٤٢[46]

This verse portrays the destruction caused by this wind. It crushed everything it passed by to bits. The word رَمِيْم refers to decomposed pieces and fragments of bones, ropes and wood. Cold wind because of its low temperature and dryness strips things of

44. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 131-132.

45. And in the account of the 'Ād too there is a sign, when We unleashed on them a devastating dry wind;

46. It reduced to powder everything over which it swept.

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their vigour, freshness and life. And if such a wind is strong also, then it crushes to bits and pieces crops, vegetation and all other life-forms. At another place in the Qur'ān, these details are stated thus: اِنَّآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ رِيۡحًا صَرۡصَرًا فِىۡ يَوۡمِ نَحۡسٍ مُّسۡتَمِرٍّ.تَنۡزِعُ النَّاسَ ۙ كَاَنَّهُمۡ اَعۡجَازُ نَخۡلٍ مُّنۡقَعِرٍ. (٥٤: ١٩-٢٠) (We let loose on them a stormy wind at a perpetual time of bad omen which plucked out people as if they were uprooted trunks of palm-trees, (54:19-20)).

وَفِىۡ ثَمُوۡدَ اِذۡ قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ تَمَتَّعُوۡا حَتّٰى حِيۡنٍ ﴿۴۳﴾ فَعَتَوۡا عَنۡ اَمۡرِ رَبِّهِمۡ فَاَخَذَتۡهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ وَهُمۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ ﴿۴۴﴾[47]

After the 'Ād, a reminder is sounded of the fate met by the Thamūd. In their account too, there is a lot from which people who want to seek a lesson can do so. The words اِذۡ قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ تَمَتَّعُوۡا حَتّٰى حِيۡنٍ specifically refer to the time when their rebellious leader had hamstrung the she-camel and their prophet Ṣāliḥ had sounded a final warning to them that they now have very little time to enjoy the luxuries of life for their doom was at hand. What is stated here concisely in the words حَتّٰى حِيۡنٍ is elaborated upon in Sūrah Hūd in the following words: فَعَقَرُوۡهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوۡا فِىۡ دَارِكُمۡ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ وَعۡدٌ غَيۡرُ مَكۡذُوۡبٍ. (١١:٦٥) (yet they slew her; so he said: "you have but three days to your ease in your dwellings; this threat shall not prove false." (11:65)). It is evident from this verse that even after the final warning when they had killed the she-camel, they were given a further respite of three days in which if they wanted, they could have repented and saved themselves from the torment.

Consider next the verse: فَعَتَوۡا عَنۡ اَمۡرِ رَبِّهِمۡ فَاَخَذَتۡهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ وَهُمۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ. The word عَتَوۡ means "arrogance and disobedience." When the preposition عَنۡ is used after it, the meaning of evasion is also incorporated into it. The implication is that they did not care about this final respite and warning provided by God; instead they arrogantly evaded the directive of God; the result was that a shout of God caught hold of them whilst they helplessly looked on.

The word صَاعِقَةُ means "a shout and scream" and refers to that punishment which came to them in lieu of their rebelliousness. In Sūrah Hūd, the word used is صَيۡحَةٌ which means "a shout." The form in which this shout of God manifested itself for them shall be explained later.

There are many things concealed in the words: وَهُمۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ

Firstly, this punishment came very openly; people kept on seeing it and could do nothing to save themselves.

Secondly, it came upon them all of a sudden after which they did not get a moment's respite. At another place, the words used are: اِنَّآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ صَيۡحَةً وَّاحِدَةً فَكَانُوۡا كَهَشِيۡمِ الۡمُحۡتَظِرِ. (٥٤:٣١) (We sent upon them a single shout and they became like the trampled

47. And in the account of the Thamūd also there is a lesson when it was said to them: "Enjoy yourselves for a while." So they rebelliously defied the command of their Lord and they were struck by a thunder bolt whilst they looked on.

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hedge of a sheep-fold builder, (54:31)).

Thirdly, after seeing it, they were totally taken aback; they could not understand what to do. An explanation will be found in the next verse.

فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوْا مِنْ قِيَامٍ وَّمَا كَانُوْا مُنْتَصِرِيْنَ ۝[48]

When they heard the thunderous shout, they were awe-stricken and shocked. Their state is described thus in Sūrah al-A'rāf: (۹۱:۷) فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ (thereupon the shudder seized them, and they were left lying facewards in their dwellings, (7:91)).

The word اِنتصارٌ means "to defend." They were not able to defend themselves against the punishment of God. This word is commonly used in this meaning. A couplet of Imru' al-Qays reads:

فأنشب أظفاره فی النسا
فقلت هبلت ألا تنتصر
Fa anshaba aẓfārahū fī al-nasā
Fa qultu hubilta allā tantaṣiru

(The dog inserted his nails in the thighs of that white antelope cow; then I said to him: O Wretch! Defend yourself now at least)[49]

Here readers should pause and try to fully grasp the nature of the punishment faced by the 'Ād and the Thamūd so that their relationship with the oaths mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah* is clear.

In his exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has explained the nature of this punishment in the following words:

Anyone who reflects on the details of the destruction of the people of 'Ād mentioned in the Qur'ān cannot escape noticing that the stormy wind which ravaged them was accompanied with the winter clouds which always appear with thunder and lightning. Wherever their destruction is discussed in the Qur'ān, a mention of wind with clouds bereft of water and of thunder is also found. In Sūrah al-Aḥqāf, the words are:

فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُّسْتَقْبِلَ اَوْدِيَتِهِمْ ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا ۭ بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهٖ ۭ رِيْحٌ فِيْهَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ. تُدَمِّرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍۭ بِاَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَاَصْبَحُوْا لَا يُرٰٓى اِلَّا مَسٰكِنُهُمْ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ. (٤٦: ٢٤-٢٥)

48. Then they were neither able to get up nor could they save themselves.
49. Imru' al-Qays, *Dīwān*, 59.

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And when they saw a cloud heading for their valleys, they said: "This is a cloud that will drench us." In fact, this is what you have sought to hasten: a hurricane bringing a woeful scourge uprooting everything at the bidding of its Lord. (46:24-25)

Obviously, all these characteristics are of the winter wind and its clouds. At this time, the northern wind appears in the form of a boisterous cold wind. Such ominous circumstances as destruction and drought ensue everywhere. In Sūrah al-Qamar, there is a reference to this in the following words: اِنَّآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ رِيۡحًا صَرۡصَرًا فِىۡ يَوۡمِ نَحۡسٍ مُّسۡتَمِرٍّ (١٩:٥٤) (We let loose on them a stormy wind at a perpetual time of bad omen, (54:19)). Similarly, in Sūrah Ḥamīm al-Sajdah, the words are: فَاَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ رِيۡحًا صَرۡصَرًا فِىۡۤ اَيَّامٍ نَّحِسَاتٍ (١٦:٤١) (so We sent upon them a violent wind in days of bad omen, 41:16))[50]

After this, Imām Farāhī has cited some parallels from classical Arabic poetry. He then says:

When these winter winds blow, they bring with them red striped clouds, hail, lightning and thunder. Classical Arabic poetry contains all the details of this anecdote …

In Sūrah Ḥamīm al-Sajdah, it is specified in the account of the people of 'Ād that lightning and thunder accompanied their punishment: فَاِنۡ اَعۡرَضُوۡا فَقُلۡ اَنۡذَرۡتُكُمۡ صٰعِقَةً مِّثۡلَ صٰعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَّ ثَمُوۡدَ. (١٣:٤١) (If they turn away, then tell them: "I warn you of the punishment of thunder like the one that annihilated 'Ād and Thamūd," (41:13)).

It is evident from these details that the Almighty sent on them the punishment of clouds, stormy wind and dreadful thunder; however, their real destruction took place because of the effects of the winds. If the way of adducing the cause from its effect is adopted, one can say that the Almighty sent striped clouds on the Thamūd which lodged within them horrible thunder and a deafening shout the way He sent clouds of thunder and lightning with the wind. Since the Thamūd were destroyed by *sā'iqah* … hence only it was mentioned; clouds were not mentioned; however, their existence is a natural corollary. Similarly, in case of the 'Ād, the wind was mentioned several times; however, clouds were mentioned at one instance only.[51]

50. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 133.
51. Ibid., 133-134.

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وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ۭ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾[52]

This verse is connected to the whole meaning which can be gauged from the anecdotes cited above: Just as God seized and destroyed other nations, He seized and destroyed before them all Noah's people. There are several examples of connection and co-ordination on meaning. Many of them can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*.

Here at the end, the incident of Noah's nation is briefly referred to. Though as per the historical sequence, it should have been mentioned first, however the Qur'ān here has not adopted the historical sequence. It has directed the attention of the Quraysh to the events whose reports and remnants were found in their own country and to which an earlier verse has referred to. Because of this objective, it was necessary that the mention of the people of Lot (sws) and Pharaoh etc be made first. They were closer to them historically as well geographically. For this reason, they could influence the addressees much more. Then at the end, the earliest anecdote was also mentioned so that the whole history could be sketched before the addressees.

A special aspect of reminding the Quraysh of Noah's anecdote was that just as the effect of the winds sworn by at the beginning of the *sūrah* had the primary role in destroying the previous nations, similarly the people of Noah (sws) were also destroyed by God through the effects of the wind. My mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has discussed in detail in his exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt the nature of destruction met by the people of Noah (sws). I am reproducing here its essential parts:

> A deliberation on the details which are found in the Qur'ān and the Torah regarding the destruction of the people of Noah (sws) shows that the primary reason for their destruction was the effects of the winds. It is mentioned in Sūrah al-'Ankabūt:
>
> وَ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فَلَبِثَ فِيْهِمْ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ اِلَّا خَمْسِيْنَ عَامًا ۭ فَاَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوْفَانُ وَ هُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ.
>
> (١٤:٢٩)
>
> And We sent forth Noah to his people, and he dwelt among them for a thousand years less fifty. Thus the flood seized them while they were sinners. (29:14)
>
> The word (*ṭūfān*: storm) is worthy of deliberation in particular. It literally means "to circulate and move in circles." The Arabs would use it to refer to stormy winds which move while rotating very fast in circles.[53]
>
> After citing some examples from classical Arabic poetry in support of this meaning,

52. And before this We seized the folks of Noah too. They were also a disobedient people.
53. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 134.

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Imām Farāhī says:

There exist in other languages too similar words or words of similar meaning for such stormy winds. In Persian, it is called *gardbād*. In English, the word cyclone is used for it. In Egyptian mythology, the god of wind was called typhoon. A special feature of this wind is that it causes heavy rains and sea water becomes turbulent. I myself have seen such a storm in Karachi. A storm emerged from the eastern side of the Indian ocean and passed on to the western side. It caused very heavy rains. Ships collided with the mountains. Great losses in life and wealth were witnessed. The circumstances which arose in the deluge of Noah (sws) as mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Torah are very similar to this. In Sūrah al-Qamar, the words are:

فَفَتَحْنَآ اَبْوَابَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَآءٍ مُّنْهَمِرٍ. وَّفَجَّرْنَا الْاَرْضَ عُيُوْنًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَآءُ عَلٰٓى اَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ. (٥٤: ١١-١٢)

So We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring forth, and caused the earth to burst with gushing springs. The waters met at the point decreed. (54: 11-12)

In the Torah, it is written

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. (Genesis 7:11)

In Sūrah Hūd, the words are:

وَهِيَ تَجْرِيْ بِهِمْ فِيْ مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ. (١١: ٤٢)

And the ark moved on with them amid mountainous waves. (11:42)

Mountainous waves result when storm winds are blowing.[54]

At the end, Imām Farāhī has summarized the discussion in the following words:

It is evident from these details that a cyclonic storm was encountered by the People of Noah (sws). It caused heavy rain. Water from the nearby seas burst out of the shores and waves started rising from all sides. In this storm, Noah's ark landed at the mount of Jūdī.[55]

54. Ibid., 134-135.
55. Ibid., 136.

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A Look at the Sequence of Events

I have referred to the essential details of the underlying wisdom of the events which have been mentioned above under their relevant verses. My mentor Imām Farahī has devoted a whole section on this and related some very subtle points in it. I will cite the important parts of this section below. Imām Farahī says:

One aspect of the anecdote of Abraham (sws) and Lot (sws) narrated here is very evident: the element of glad tidings and warning exists simultaneously. A little deliberation shows that the situation of the wind which is sworn by here was no different. At times, it is a boon and at times it is a bane. The comprehensive nature of the anecdote of Abraham (sws) required that it should occupy the beginning.

After this, the anecdote of the people of Lot (sws) is related. The reason for this was that the Arabs would get the chance to pass by their overturned and ravaged cities and see their signs and remnants from their very eyes. Moreover, the initial oaths: وَالذّٰرِيٰتِ ذَرْوًا.فَالْحٰمِلٰتِ وِقْرًا (۱-۲) (fierce winds that scatter dust, then lift a burden, (1-2)) bear more harmony with the incident of destruction of the People of Noah (sws). They were destroyed by tempestuous winds which covered them with sand and pebbles. Such was the quantity of this rubble that it totally concealed their cities.

Furthermore, what is said in an earlier verse: وَ فِی الْاَرْضِ اٰیٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِیْنَ (۲۰) (and in the earth and yourselves also are signs for those who have conviction (20)), is substantiated by the anecdote of Noah's people, as has been explained earlier.

After this, Moses' anecdote is cited. This has been related in the Qur'ān at many instances and has important lessons to be learnt from. It has a very clear affinity with the later oaths: فَالْجٰرِیٰتِ یُسْرًا.فَالْمُقَسِّمٰتِ اَمْرًا (۳-٤) (then lift a burden, then glide slowly, (3-4)). This has already been explained earlier.

Another point which needs to be kept in consideration is that in anecdotes which begin with the name of the prophets the element of glad tidings is dominant. After that, in anecdotes which are related by the names of nations the element of warning and admonition is dominant. Amongst the nations, the 'Ād and the Thamūd are specially mentioned. The reason for this is that the punishment which visited them came in the form of striped clouds (وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ (and striped winter clouds bear witness)). Reflection will show that the sequence which is found in the oaths is the same as the one found in that of the nations. In the mention of the 'Ād and the Thamūd, the 'Ād were mentioned first because not only were they

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historically earlier but also because of the fact that the punishment which came upon them was a result of the effects of winds and clouds.

As far as the anecdote of Noah (sws) is concerned, it is an immortal sign from God of His mercy on all the nations and peoples. The following verse testifies to this reality:

اِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَا الْمَآءُ حَمَلْنٰكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ. لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَّتَعِيَهَآ اُذُنٌ وَّاعِيَةٌ. (٦٩: ١١-١٢)

And when the water exceeded the limits, it is We Who carried you upon the ark to make this incident a reminder for you and that retaining ears may hear and retain it. (69:11-12)

This anecdote is an amalgam of the miracles found in the earth and the heavens, the winds and the clouds, the water and the ship. Because of this comprehensive nature, it occupies the status of an anecdote in which arguments drawn from the world within man and the one outside him are all amalgamated. Thus it was very apt with regard to the testimonies borne by the winds stated earlier and the signs found in the heavens and the earth and within man stated later that the anecdote of Noah (sws) be recounted and portray all these realities before the eye.

Moreover, the 'Ād and the Thamūd were given the vicegerency of this earth after the people of Noah (sws). For this reason, it was very appropriate that with their mention, the people of Noah (sws) also be mentioned. Other examples of this also exist in the Qur'ān:

وَاَنَّهٗٓ اَهْلَكَ عَادَ ِۨالْاُوْلٰى. وَثَمُوْدَا۟ فَمَآ اَبْقٰى. وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا هُمْ اَظْلَمَ وَاَطْغٰى. (٥٣: ٥٠-٥٢)

And it is He who destroyed the ancient 'Ād and the Thamud also, sparing no one, and before them the people of Noah also. (53:50-52)

Readers should pay special attention to the words: وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ

Since this anecdote is a famous and ancient one and common to all nations, a brief reference to it was enough; moreover, it was presented as the final anecdote. Furthermore, because of conciseness a mere change in style was enough to afford it the status of an independent and important tale. Thus the words وَفِيْ نُوْحٍ were not used as used earlier in وَفِيْ مُوْسٰى and وَفِيْ عَادٍ. On the contrary, the words used are وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ so that this changed style of its own sounds the importance of this anecdote.[56]

56. Ibid., 137-138.

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Section IV: Verses (47-60)

In the subsequent verses, the Almighty while drawing attention to His signs of power and providence has threatened people of reward and punishment. In this regard, a reminder is also sounded regarding the belief of monotheism so that it becomes evident to people that everyone will face the same one God; no other being will be able to save them from God's grasp. In the end, an assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws): the attitude his nation is adopting towards them in not new; the same attitude was adopted by every nation towards their respective messengers; so he should patiently continue with his task and ignore the miscreants; he should call those who pay heed; the Almighty will help him and his companions at every step; he does not need the help of any one other than God; those who are asking to hasten the advent of the punishment should be told to desist from this behaviour; when the time appointed for them expires only then will the punishment appear and it would indeed be very severe on them.

Text and Translation

وَالسَّمَآءَ بَنَيْنٰهَا بِاَيْىدٍ وَّاِنَّا لَمُوْسِعُوْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾ وَالْاَرْضَ فَرَشْنٰهَا فَنِعْمَ الْمٰهِدُوْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾ وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۴۹﴾ فَفِرُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّىْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۵۰﴾ وَلَا تَجْعَلُوْا مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ؕ اِنِّىْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ
مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۵۱﴾ كَذٰلِكَ مَآ اَتَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا قَالُوْا سَاحِرٌ اَوْ مَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿۵۲﴾ اَتَوَاصَوْا بِهٖ ۚ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُوْنَ
﴿۵۳﴾ فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَمَآ اَنْتَ بِمَلُوْمٍ ﴿۵۴﴾ وَّ ذَكِّرْ فَاِنَّ الذِّكْرٰى تَنْفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْاِنْسَ اِلَّا
لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿۵۶﴾ مَآ اُرِيْدُ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ رِّزْقٍ وَّمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّطْعِمُوْنِ ﴿۵۷﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِيْنُ ﴿۵۸﴾ فَاِنَّ
لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ذَنُوْبًا مِّثْلَ ذَنُوْبِ اَصْحٰبِهِمْ فَلَا يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنِ ﴿۵۹﴾ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ يَّوْمِهِمُ الَّذِىْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾

And We built the heavens with power and indeed We are Mighty. And We have spread out the earth; so how excellently do We spread out! And We have created all things in pairs that you may receive a reminder; therefore, hasten to God. I am from Him an open warner for you. And set up no deity besides God. I am from Him an open warner. (47-51)

In a similar manner, whenever a messenger came to their ancestors they regarded him to be a sorcerer or one possessed. Have they made this will to one another. They are but a people rebellious. So turn away from them. You have no blame on you now. And keep on reminding because reminders benefit those who believe. (52-55)

I have created the jinn and men only that they worship Me. I seek no sustenance from them, nor do I want that they should feed Me. Indeed, God is the Provider, the Mighty and the Powerful. (56-58)

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Thus for these wrongdoers, there is a time fixed like that of their companions before; so they should not ask to hasten it. For these disbelievers there is destruction on account of the day of theirs of which they are being warned. (59-60)

Explanation

وَالسَّمَآءَ بَنَيْنٰهَا بِاَيْىدٍ وَّاِنَّا لَمُوْسِعُوْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾[57]

The general meaning of the word اَيْد is "the hand." However, it also signifies power and might. It is not undefined in order to magnify its importance. The word مُوْسِعُوْنَ signifies that His dominion and authority are very vast. The greatest of tasks is not beyond Him.

While co-ordinating this verse to the ones above in which historical arguments are cited in favour of reward and punishment, God has directed attention to His power and might which every person can see by observing the vast expanse of sky and its majesty above him. The implication is that how can it be difficult for the God Who can bring into existence this strong and limitless sky to recreate mankind once it dies and becomes dust. At another place, the words used to convey this meaning are: ءَاَنْتُمْ اَشَدُّ خَلْقًا اَمِ السَّمَآءُ ۚ بَنٰهَا. (۲۷:۷۹) (Is it more difficult to create you or the heavens? He made it. (79:27))

The words وَاِنَّا لَمُوْسِعُوْنَ are meant to dispel a misconception: it is not that after creating this vast expanse of the sky all His powers have been exhausted and He cannot do anything further; His power is expansive and ell-embracing; He can do whatever He intends to whenever He want to; nothing is beyond His control. At other instances, this topic is also referred to by saying that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and He was not a bit tired: وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِىْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ۖ وَّمَا مَسَّنَا مِنْ لُّغُوْبٍ (۳۸:۵۰).

وَالْاَرْضَ فَرَشْنٰهَا فَنِعْمَ الْمٰهِدُوْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾[58]

After the heavens, attention is now directed at the earth that how nicely it has been spread out and how wonderfully well has God done this. A reflection on the earth will not only reveal the greatness and majesty of God but also His providence. As a result of this reflection, every sane person reaches the conclusion that the God Who has created this earth and provided in it various means and resources to nourish and nurture man has not done something without a purpose. It is against His mercy and providence to do something meaningless. It is an essential requisite of His mercy and providence that He bring a day in which every person is held accountable for the life he spent in this world – whether it was spent in the obedience of God or whether it

57. And We built the heavens with power and indeed We are Mighty.
58. And We have spread out the earth; so how excellently do We spread out!

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was spent following one's own whims. If a person spent his life in God's obedience, he is worthy of being rewarded for his gratitude, and if he followed his own desires, he deserves to be punished for his rebelliousness. This topic is discussed in the Qur'ān at various places in different styles. It shall be further explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nabā'.

The expression فَنِعْمَ الْمٰهِدُوْنَ is meant to point to the various manifestations of mercy and providence from which it is evident that the Creator of this world is not merely someone who possesses immense power but also just as His power is immense; similarly, there is no limit to His mercy, wisdom, sustenance and graciousness. All these attributes entail that He bring forth a day in which He administer justice between mankind and His complete justice and complete mercy manifest themselves on that day. If this does not happen, then His attributes of mercy and providence stand refuted whereas every nook and corner of this universe bears evidence to them.

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾[59]

This verse directs our attention to another special aspect of this universe and this aspect too encompasses within it an argument for reward and punishment.

An elucidation of this concise statement is that God has created everything in pairs in this universe. Thus the heavens and the earth have been mentioned earlier. Everything fulfils its purpose and meaning together with its counterpart. This on the one hand furnishes an argument in favour of monotheism: a wise and sagacious being has created this world; He is above and beyond this universe and controls everything and by creating harmony between its various components makes them a means of producing conducive results in subservience to His power and wisdom. On the other hand, this also furnishes an obvious argument in favour of the Hereafter. The reason is that when everything in this world exists in pairs and everything fulfils its objective with its counterpart, it is essential that this world also have a counterpart so that its deficiency be compensated by it. This counterpart is the Hereafter. After believing in the Hereafter, this world becomes purposeful and meaningful, and in the absence of this belief, this world becomes a meaningless and worthless thing. For this very reason, the Qur'ān has asked all those who do not believe in the Hereafter whether they think that they have been created without a purpose and that they will not be returned to God. This argument has been elaborated upon at its appropriate place. Here the words لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ are meant to direct attention to the reality that the existence of everything in this world in pairs serves as a reminder that this world also has a pair through which it reaches its culmination and that pair is the Hereafter.

59. And We have created all things in pairs that you may receive a reminder.

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فَفِرُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۚ﴿۵۰﴾[60]

The implication is that when the Hereafter is sure to come, then this necessitates that they desist showing animosity to the messenger of God and that they run towards God and prepare for the day when everyone will be held accountable for his deeds and when no one except God will be of any benefit to anyone.

The words اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ mean that the Prophet (sws) is an open warner from God so that before the advent of the Hereafter he is able to warn people of it and so that on that day no one will have the excuse that no warner came to inform them of it; as an open warner, he is warning them of the events and horrors of that day; the responsibility of the consequences now rests on them.

The veiled reference found in the expression نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ has already been explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis. The word مِنْهُ signifies the fact that the Prophet (sws) has specially been sent by God to warn his people. Some people have regarded مِنْهُ to be a preposition of نَذِيْرٌ. However, this opinion is against linguistic principles of Arabic as well as parallel verses of the Qur'ān.

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوْا مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ؕ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۚ﴿۵۱﴾[61]

This is not a repetition of what was said previously; it unveils another reality: people should not remain under the misconception that when the Hereafter will come, their alleged deities and intercessors will save them from God's grasp. They should not ruin their fate by relying on such imaginary supports. On that day, they will face God alone and all other supports will be of no use to them. The Prophet (sws) has also been entrusted with this mission from God that he explain to them fully that God has no partners.

I have been explaining at various places in this exegesis that in the first place the Idolaters would regard the Hereafter to be improbable and if at all they believed in it as a supposition they thought that their matter would be presented before their deities who through their influence would save them from the grasp of God. This notion had rendered the Day of Judgement to be absolutely ineffective in their eyes. To negate this false notion of theirs, the Qur'ān always mentions the belief of monotheism with the Hereafter. Examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. A similar warning is sounded here.

كَذٰلِكَ مَآ اَتَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا قَالُوْا سَاحِرٌ اَوْ مَجْنُوْنٌ ۚ﴿۵۲﴾[62]

An assurance is sounded here to the Prophet (sws) that he should not show grief on

60. Therefore, hasten to God. I am from Him an open warner for you.

61. And set up no deity besides God. I am from Him an open warner.

62. In a similar manner, whenever a messenger came to their ancestors they regarded him to be a sorcerer or one possessed.

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their attitude. He is not the first to encounter this; previous nations too have adopted the same attitude with their respective messengers.

The words سَاحِرٌ اَوۡ مَجۡنُوۡنٌ signify the fact that when on their demand, their messengers showed them the signs of God, these people regarded them to be sorcerers, and when they were warned of the punishment of the Hereafter, they were regarded as men possessed. The words سَاحِرٌ and مَجۡنُوۡنٌ are cited here as examples. The implication is that they invented one excuse or another to oppose their messengers. In a similar way, the miscreants of the Prophet's nation too are fabricating stories to malign him. Miscreants have always behaved with the messengers of God in this world. It is not that the Prophet (sws) has been negligent of or lacking in his duties nor is he the only person who has faced this situation; so he should not lose heart; in fact, with perseverance, he should combat the circumstances he is facing the way previous messengers did so with resoluteness.

اَتَوَاصَوۡا بِهٖ ۚ بَلۡ هُمۡ قَوۡمٌ طَاغُوۡنَ ﴿۵۳﴾[63]

This is an expression of amazement at the similarity of attitude adopted by the miscreants: it is as if the miscreants of every nation have made a will to the ones who will come later that whenever a messenger comes to them they should behave similarly. Thus every coming generation very faithfully clung to this will made by its predecessors.

The words بَلۡ هُمۡ قَوۡمٌ طَاغُوۡنَ unveil the actual reality: the real cause of this similarity in attitude is that these people [the Quraysh] also are rebellious like the rejecters of the messengers of the previous nations. This similarity in temperament is the real reason that they have stuck to their ill-ways like their predecessors and they will meet a similar fate.

فَتَوَلَّ عَنۡهُمۡ فَمَاۤ اَنۡتَ بِمَلُوۡمٍ ﴿۵۴﴾[64]

The Prophet (sws) is told to ignore these people who use every opportunity to show their animosity to him; he has discharged his responsibility as a messenger of warning them and communicating to them the truth; he will not be held accountable for it before God and will not be asked in this regard; in fact, they themselves are to blame and shall soon see the fate their attitude has led them to.

وَّ ذَكِّرۡ فَاِنَّ الذِّكۡرٰى تَنۡفَعُ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۵۵﴾[65]

Though the Prophet (sws) should ignore the miscreants and the rebellious elements,

63. Have they made this will to one another. They are but a people rebellious.
64. So turn away from them. You have no blame on you now.
65. And keep on reminding because reminders benefit those who believe.

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he should continue to guide those who are ready to listen to him. The seekers of faith benefit from his reminders and instruction. It is evident from this that the directive of ignoring people relates to the rebellious leaders of the Quraysh who because of conceit were not prepared to listen to anything yet the Prophet (sws) was anxious that they embrace faith so that this could be instrumental in strengthening the new faith and pave the way for others to accept it. This expedience in itself was significant, and for this reason the Prophet (sws) wandered after them for a considerable period of time; however, when the truth had been conclusively conveyed to them, and it became evident that these rocks will not budge from their place the Almighty stopped him from wasting his time on them.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾ مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعِمُونِ ﴿٥٧﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ ﴿٥٨﴾[66]

After directing the Prophet (sws) to ignore the leaders of the Quraysh, two important realities are pointed out in these verses.

Firstly, if God has created jinn and men, then it is not because of any need of His so that He should keep on pampering them in all circumstances; He has created them to reap blessings and high rank destined for them by Him by duly worshipping Him and being obedient to Him. For this very purpose, He sent His messengers so that people get to know the actual reality. However, the responsibility of a messenger is to only delineate the truth. He is not responsible that people also necessarily accept the truth presented by him. The messenger has fulfilled his obligation. If people are not accepting his calls, they are only taking themselves closer to doom and are not in any way harming God and His messenger so that their pleasure should be won at every cost.

In other words, this verse states the reason on account of which the Prophet (sws) was directed in the previous verse to ignore the leaders of the Quraysh: without these arrogant people none of God's tasks will suffer so that he should be so anxious and over-concerned to go after them.

Secondly, the provisions needed to call people to the religion of God are found with the call: those who are the proponents of this call should trust God only; they should fully keep in consideration the fact that God has created them to worship Him and to be obedient to Him. This is the purpose they were created for and this should be their aim in life which must be fulfilled at all costs. They can sacrifice everything for this but cannot sacrifice it for anything. If they fear that for this crime of theirs, their enemies will financially rout them even then they should stick to their stance and rest

66. I have created the jinn and men only that they worship Me. I seek no sustenance from them, nor do I want that they should feed Me. Indeed, God is the Provider, the Mighty and the Powerful.

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assured that if they will not deviate from their purpose of life the Almighty, against the wishes of their enemies, will provide for them from where neither they nor their enemies can ever think of. It is God alone Who provides and nourishes all and His schemes are very well-grounded. The power of the greatest enemies cannot overcome His power.

This, in other words, is an assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws) and his companions in the times when the disbelievers were planning to dislodge them from Makkah and impose a financial embargo on them; the Prophet (sws) and his companions are told that they should adhere to their purpose of serving and worshipping the one and only God – the purpose for which God has created them. The true provider and sustainer is God. He shall provide for them in a manner they cannot even think of. The obligation of human beings is to serve and worship their Lord. Providing for them is the responsibility of God, and in no way is He lacking to fulfil them. This subject is specially found in the Qur'ān at instances where the Prophet (sws) is directed to ignore the affluent among the Quraysh and persevere on his stance. Some examples of such verses are given below:

وَاْمُرْ اَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا ؕ لَا نَسْـَٔلُكَ رِزْقًا ؕ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ ؕ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوٰى. (۲۰:۱۳۲)

Enjoin prayer on your people and be diligent in its observance. We demand of you no provision: We shall Ourself provide for you and final success is for the pious. (20:132)

At another instance, the words are:

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ اِلٰى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهٖۤ اَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ. (۱۵:۸۸)

Do not look at what We have given some groups of the disbelievers nor grieve at their state of affairs and bend your arms of affection on the faithful. (15:88)

After understanding the context and background of these verses, let us take a look at their components.

The word عبادۃ is used in its broad sense in وَ مَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَ الْاِنْسَ اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ: ie worshipping God and obeying His directives. The purpose is to bring forth the real objective of life so that each person knows the objective he must live and die for. It should remain clear that worshipping God is required not because He is in need of worship; on the contrary, the Qur'ān has specified at a number of place that man himself is in need of it because the stairway to their own elevation is this worship. If they deviate from it, their status is not more than that of animals; in fact, they become even worse. Here the jinn and men are mentioned as creations of equal status because God has blessed both of them to exercise their free will and both are equally accountable before God and will deserve the same reward and rank if they duly

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worship Him.

The words مَآ اُرِيْدُ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ رِّزْقٍ وَّ مَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّطْعِمُوْنِ explain that the Almighty has not created man and jinn to fulfill any of His needs so that without them some of His tasks would not be achieved. He has neither imposed on them the responsibility of providing for His creatures nor is He Himself in need of being provided for so that He want Himself to be fed by them; on the contrary, He Himself is responsible for providing and sustaining them. It needs to be kept in mind that the status of a person who makes the effort to provide for himself and his family is no more than that of a means. It is only God who causes his efforts to bear fruit. Without God's blessings, all of his works is bound to end up in vain. The Qur'ān thus says: اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تَحْرُثُوْنَ. ءَاَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُوْنَهٗٓ اَمْ نَحْنُ الزّٰرِعُوْنَ. (٥٦:٦٣-٦٤) (have you reflected on what you sow? Is it you who nourish it or We? (56:63-64)).

The words وَ مَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّطْعِمُوْنِ are a refutation of a false notion of polytheist nations whereby they thought their deities consume and relish the animal sacrifice presented to them.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِيْنُ imply that difficult circumstances should not lead a person to any doubt regarding the providence and sustenance of God. It is God Who in reality provides all and He is mighty and powerful. Adverse circumstances and resistance from people cannot defeat His schemes.

Imām Farāhī has explained the expression ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِيْنُ in the following words:

> Since there is a stoppage (*waqf*) at the word مَتِيْنُ its declension is not known and when this is so no question arises about any difference in its recital. However, the question about its declension does arise? Some regard it to be declined in the genitive and thus an attribute of the word قُوَّةٍ. The word قُوَّت refers to the strand of a rope and in Arabic the word مَتِيْنُ is a very common word to signify the strength of a rope. A question does arise here: the word قُوَّةٍ is feminine and the word مَتِيْنُ is masculine. The answer to this question is that the word مَتِيْنُ is of the category of فعيل which in Arabic is used both for masculine and feminine genders. Thus, for example, the Qur'ān says: اِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللّٰهِ قَرِيْبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ. (٧:٥٦) (God's mercy is close to the righteous, (7:56)).
>
> Some other people regard it to be declined in the nominative qualifying ذُو الْقُوَّةِ; however, nowhere else in the Qur'ān has the word مَتِيْنُ ever been used as an attribute of God. Thus it is essential that its subject (*fā'il*) be regarded to be suppressed ie المتين قوته. In this way, this difference will only be of declensions; there will be no essential difference in meaning.[67]

67. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 148-149.

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فَاِنَّ لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ذَنُوْبًا مِّثْلَ ذَنُوْبِ اَصْحٰبِهِمْ فَلَا يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنِ ﴿۵۹﴾[68]

The word ذَنُوْب denotes a filled bucket. It is not used for any empty bucket. The meaning of this word was elevated to denote "share."

A couplet of Abū Zu'ayd reads:[69]

لعمرك والمنايا غالبات
لكل بنى أب منها ذنوب

La 'umruka wa al-manaya ghālibātuṇ
Li kulli banī abiṇ minhā dhanūbu

(I swear by your life that there is no escape from death; it has a share in the sons of every father)

In this verse, the word ذَنُوْب refers to the period of life allotted to the disbelievers. The words لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا refer to the leaders of the Quraysh whose attitude is being discussed here. In other words, just as the Almighty gave respite to their earlier compatriots (reference is to the 'Ād and the Thamūd etc) so that they could do what they wanted to and complete their term, in a similar manner, God has also granted the Quraysh a time of respite so that the truth from God is conclusively conveyed to them. This period has to end some time and the fate with which they are being threatened with is bound to come before them. So they should not hasten to call for the punishment they are being threatened with thinking that this period is unlimited. This subject is discussed in the Qur'ān at many places. Thus for example: وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُوْرُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ ۭ بَلْ لَّهُمْ مَّوْعِدٌ لَّنْ يَّجِدُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مَوْىِلًا. (۵۸:۱۸) (your Lord is forgiving and merciful; had it been His way to punish them immediately for their sins, he would have instantly sent punishment to them; but He has set for them a predestined day from which they cannot find any refuge, (18:58)).

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ يَّوْمِهِمُ الَّذِيْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾[70]

The words فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ are general, they signify the disbelievers of the Quraysh who while regarding the warnings of the Prophet (sws) to be mere bluff were demanding the punishment merely to pester the Prophet (sws); they were asking him to bring it about if it was to come for they would not believe in it without seeing it. The verse

68. Thus for these wrongdoers, there is a time fixed like that of their companions before; so they should not ask to hasten it.

69. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 1, 392.

70. For these disbelievers there is destruction on account of the Day of theirs of which they are being warned.

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tells them not to hasten that day. That day will be very severe. No one will be able to give refuge to them because of that day from the eternal ruin they will face on it.

With the blessing of God, this brings me to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (so gratitude be to Him for this).

Raḥmānābād
18th April 1977 AD
28th Rabī' al-Thānī 1397 AH

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